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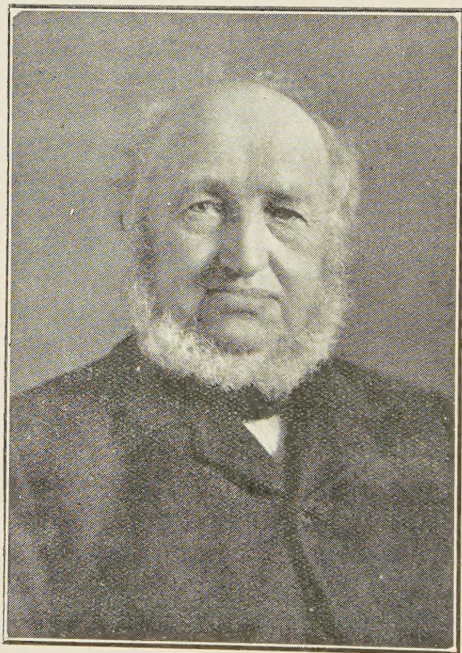


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JOHN HYSLOP.

# ECHOES

FROM THE

# BORDER HILLS

BEING THE REMINISCENCES OF  
THE LATE JOHN HYSLOP, J.P.  
LANGHOLM

EDITED BY HIS SON  
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ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

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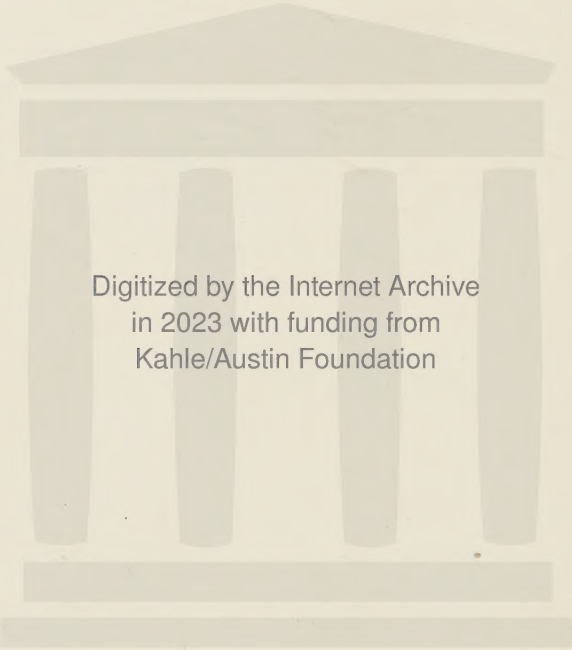
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1912



TO  
THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS  
OF  
ESKDALE  
SCATTERED THE WIDE WORLD OVER.



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## PREFACE.

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IN June of this year, there was published with the title of *Langholm As It Was*, a history of Langholm and Eskdale, written by my father and myself. As explained in the Preface, my father died whilst the volume was in the press. Within three months of its publication, the entire issue of the book was exhausted, and copies cannot be obtained to meet the demand, which is still active.

I mentioned in the Preface that, owing to considerations of space, a large part of my father's Reminiscences which form Part IV. of the book had been omitted.

Strong representations have been made to the Publishers and myself to issue at once either a second edition, or to complete and publish as a separate volume the Reminiscences, which both subscribers and reviewers have been good enough to say provided the greatest interest and attraction to the general reader.

It is in answer to these demands that this volume is now offered to the public, but the second edition of *Langholm As It Was* must be postponed for a few years.

The cordial and gratifying reception given to the Reminiscences in *Langholm As It Was* leads me to hope that a similar welcome will be accorded to *Echoes from the Border Hills*.

It was with great diffidence and only after much pressure by his own friends, and mainly by the Secretary of the Eskdale and Liddesdale Archæological Society—the Rev. George Orr, to whom I personally have been greatly indebted for counsel and help in both of these works—that my father consented to write down his recollections of the Langholm of long ago, and as before explained, all except a small portion, was written in his 84th year.

In editing his Manuscripts for the present volume, I have drawn also upon a large collection of his letters to myself, almost every one of which contained some story or some interesting glance

back into the past. My aim has been so to present these incidents that they will convey the same impression as if the reader were listening to my father relating them from his armchair at his own fireside, from which favourable vantage ground he so often entertained and amused those who knew him intimately. But these printed pages must ever convey a less vivid impression than his living voice.

With this in my mind, I have retained the details which were so characteristic of all my father's stories and descriptions and which, in my opinion, helped greatly to give them that vividness which made them so appreciated by his friends.

I have endeavoured to arrange the material at my disposal so that *Echoes from the Border Hills* may suggest at least a fairly accurate picture of what life in Langholm was like seventy or eighty years ago.

I have omitted, with only a few exceptions, all references to people still living, and for the most part I have assigned different names to the men and women mentioned.

My cordial thanks are due to Mr. Harry Goldsbrough, who, by his careful reading of the proof sheets, has saved me a large amount of labour.

ROBERT HYSLOP.

5 BELLE VUE CRESCENT,  
SUNDERLAND,

13TH DECEMBER, 1912.



## CONTENTS.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### EARLY MEMORIES.

Pages 1-18

Looking Back—"The Muckle Toon"—No Monotony—Legends and Traditions—Concentration of Mind—"Half-a-croon Andra"—Gonial Blast—Reform Bill—My Last Procession—Cholera—The Monument—Hogg's Monument—Fatality on Warbla Hill.

### CHAPTER II.

#### THE OLD BORDER SPIRIT.

Pages 19-44

Peninsular War—Pasleys, Malcolms, Littles—James Hyslop—A Fortunate Accident—Eskdale Patriotism—Blin' Bob—Rob and Nell—"Wullie Wud"—Killed by a Cow!—"Old Corunna"—"Tommy Tinnie"—Letters from Afar—The Burning Bush—Elijah's Cave—Dr. Graham—Auld Tib—The Commissariat Department—"Look up the book"—The North Pole—Press-gang—Battle of the Coops—Battle of the Hames—"Scots Wine"—Local Jealousies—Dr. David Irving—"Canonby Coutts"—Badajos—To-names.

### CHAPTER III.

#### "LANGHOLM AS IT WAS."

Pages 45-84

Scots Tongue—The Simple Life—Battle of Arkinholm—The Dam Brig—The Peats—Big Rob—A Burns Dinner—The Jail—Bauldy's Steps—Mungo Park—Caroline Street—Cosiness—

Peat Fires — Candle-making — Lighting — Gas — Singeing sheep heads—Matches and Spunks—Furniture—Box-beds—"Hurleys"—Cocks and Hens—Kindlers—The Call-bell—The Hut—The Shower-bath—Cooking—Horn-spoons—"Jam wi' butcher-meat!"—John Weave's Shirt—After-dinner Oratory—"Bonnie Willie"—Potato Disease—Meal Riots—Barley-meal Porridge—Tom Cairns' Suit—"Juist walk across the flure"—Stuff Hats—Squeaky Boots—Plaids—"Little Fashionables"—Women's Dress—Fortunes—"Twenty-one half-mutchkins"—"Take down that ham and give it to the poor."

#### CHAPTER IV.

CARTS AND COACHES.

Pages 85-103

Travelling by Cart—Umbrellas—The Slate Carts—The Mail Coach—Cross Keys—Mosspaul—The Wordsworths—Carriers—"He got the cauld"—The Postman's Predicament—A Ghost!—Peggy's Horse—Peggy's Bonnet—The Railway—"Silloth"—The Bill Rejected—Excursions—Nettle on the Calton Hill—"Near enuech the edge!"—Catching Trains—"New York!"—Dollars and Cents—"The Great Divide."

#### CHAPTER V.

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS.

Page 104-112

"Chattie Smith"—Sir Charles Pasley—Broomholm School—George J. Todd—Handwriting—Mr. Todd's Methods—A "Scunner" at the Bible—Catechism—Truants—"Rinning the cutter"—Sorbie Syke—Lock-out Day—Tawse—Jean Thomson—Schoolmasters' Salaries—"Coal Day"—"Easton's Schule"—Auld Ned,

## CHAPTER VI.

HER MAJESTY'S MAILS.

Pages 113-121

Postal Rates—Pete Graham's brother—Letters by Carriers—A "Chance" to Heaven—Post-Runners—Tom Robson—Willie Beattie—The Postman's Bag—The "Bars"—Bet the Post—Johnie Linton—Envelopes—"Dear Phaim and Tom"—The Telephone.

## CHAPTER VII.

OUR AMUSEMENTS.

Pages 122-142

Fighting—Battle of Jouker's Close—Johnie Weave and the Tramps—"Demanded his tea!"—Fishing—Burning the Water—Guddling—Jim Donly—News of Waterloo—Poaching—Tommy Douglas's Defence—Serious Cases—Incident in Flask Wood—Garden Thefts—Curling—Sergeant Pearson—Cure for Bronchitis—"Soopin'"—Storm in Tarras—A Backward Glance—Football—Westerkirk v. Langholm—Bowling—Cycling—"Rinnin' aboot on a gird"—Dancing—Willie Dick—The Assembly—"Mainners"—The Mountebanks—"Down Lioness!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

Pages 143-156

Handfasting—Courting—"Crying" the Banns—"Bidding"—A Fiddler's Bid—A Singular Custom—The Wedding Day—"Hooching"—Tommy—The Procession—"Ba' Siller"—"The Herd from Te'iot-Heid"—Presents—The Kirking—Divorce Custom—Pete's Way—Gretna-Green Marriages—The Bride Imprisoned—Penny Weddings.

## CHAPTER IX.

ODD FOLKS AND ODD EVENTS.      Pages 157-176

"Characters"—Tom Cairns—"Silver and gold have I none"—  
The Nursery Apples—Mary—"Riches take unto themselves  
wings"—"Except these bonds"—"Napoleon!"—Chairlie  
Hogg—Mary Chisholm—Mary Jardine—"Swithering"—  
Crossing the Jordan—The Haggis—The Flourocks—Chairlie's  
Will—Jennie's "Marriage"—Jennie "Death"—Ebie in love!  
—Nell o' the Tail—"Poets"—Dingleton—"A padoked hair  
craw"—Davie Beattie—William Wilson—Langholm Theatre  
—Geordie Hogg's Ride.

## CHAPTER X.

SUPERSTITIONS.      Pages 177-193

Dark Days—Witchcraft—The Broomholm Trial—Charlie Hope  
and Bogles—Charlie's Arch at Stapelgortoun—Omens—  
Rowan Trees—"Keeping the elders away"—"The Wise  
Woman of Brampton"—The Evil Eye—The Little Brig—  
"Gilpin Horner"—"Warnings"—The Card Party—Legend  
of the Langfauld Wood—White Women—The Kirkstyle  
Goat.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.      Pages 194-206

Longevity—Westerkirk Air—"Incomes"—"Fell" Women—  
Dwams—A Canny Body—Bleeding—Peg Ir'in's Bottle—  
Curing a Cut—Dentistry—Lancie Armstrong and "the Drug"  
—Jamie Armstrong—Lancie and the Turpentine—Overdose  
of Laudunum—The Pan-lids—The Doctor's Man—The  
Whelps—Dr. W. J. Carlyle.



## CHAPTER XII.

### FUNERAL CUSTOMS.

Pages 207-214

Sitting up—Burke and Hare—Watching—Funeral Letters—Jamie o' the Blough—"A quiet corp"—Tasting—"To get a cord"—Funeral Bread—The Blacks—Cuddyling and the Miller—Peggy Cairns's End—Her Room—Her Beds—Peggy on a Sunday.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### "THE TWA BRIGS."

Pages 215-221

The Railway—Langholm Bridge—Thomas Telford—Robin Hotson—Tibbie Donald—The Flood—Tibbie's Courtship—Restoration of Langholm Bridge Boatford Bridge—The Accident.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE COMMON-RIDING.

Pages 222-242

Riding the Marches—Langholm Commony—The Award of 1759—Bauldy Beattie—The Races—Wrestling—The Cornet—A Meikleholmer—The Barley-bannock and Salted Herring—The Spade—The Thistle—The Crown—Crying the Fair—Text of Proclamation—John Irving—The Dog Trail—Langholm Band—Common-Riding Airs—Children's Besoms—"Auld Lang Syne"—Kinmont Willie—An Impression—Flodden Field—Wauchope Kirkyard.

## CHAPTER XV.

### OUR HIGH DAYS.

Pages 243-263

Summer Fair—Eskdale lilt—Droves of Lambs—Herding—Measles—Pocket-picking—Davie Haggart—A Common-

Riding wedding—"The thunnery Common-Riding"—Jamie's dirty face—Hiring days—Stalls—Our Barber—"Ye canna get a dram"—"Fairings"—James Dyer—Minstrels—Isaac Fletcher — The Kennedys — The Hutchinsons — Dancing—Chuckers-out — Constables — Sandie and Davie — Rouns — Bidding against his own wife !—Hallow E'en—"Taffy-join"—Gambie's taffy — Hogmanay — Tin-cans — Tracts — New Year.

## CHAPTER XVI.

WATER AND WINE.

Pages 264-279

Langholm life in 1798—James Haldane—Rowland Hill—Scots Greys — Licensed houses — Dram-shops — Inn parlours — "Better than Moses"—Mr. Martin flies—"Pretty tidy"—"Them muckle feet"—Freemasonry—"May the Lord increase yer trouble!"—George Easton—James McVittie—Walter Scott—"Joining the Total"—Smuggling—Craws-knowe—A drunken cow—Smuggling—Smuggler Jean—Old Wells—Thomas Black—Whita Well—Eppie—The Picnic.

## CHAPTER XVII.

OUR VILLAGE HAMPDENS.

Pages 280-301

"Puggy" Wilkinson—French Revolution—Lord John Russell—"Extirpat"—The Manse Bees—Web-day—Wages—"The Dooble-desperate"—"They're a' in"—Effigy Burning—"The Pikes"—Lang Davie—"The Fenians"—Gladstone—Langholm Tweeds—*Scotsman* and *Courant*—English Tom—Jamie Eppie—Poor Rates—Law Cases—Border "persuasiveness"—The Weaver's eloquence—Jamie's Trial—The Sheriff's Officer tricked—"May the Lord have mercy on your soul"—The Langholm Paper.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR WEATHER PROPHETS. Pages 302-310

The Weather—Signs—The Weather-glass—Charlie Hope—The Souter Stane—Arthur Dickie—Big Dowie Stane—The Swallows—Judy Morgan's corn—"A wheen auld paulies"—The Storm on the Solway—"A boy, a boy!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE ARKLETON SPECTRE. Pages 311-317

Arkleton Crag's—The Spectre—Mirage on Irvine Edge—The Monument—Langholm Sunsets—The Hill-head Fire!--The Warbla Diamond—Northern Lights—666—The Star Shower, 1866.

## CHAPTER XX.

THE KIRK. Pages 318-357

Denominations Robert Smellie—Robbie Corrie—"A'd never muckle brow o' Jawcob"—The Morisonians—Walking on Cogie—Mount Zion—Disinherited—Betty Wilson and Jock—Johnie Ca-pa—The Scots' Sabbath—Tom McVittie—"Whustlin' on the Sawbath"—The Elders' Tasks—The Eldership—"No nonsense"—"Make a star!"—Session Case—Jim Donly—Accommodation in the Kirk—Town-head Kirk—Story of the Lamps—Tibbie Park—"Bonnie on the doors"—Jimmy Armstrong's Bible—Rebuilding the Kirk—"Who gave the halfpenny?"—The Collection—Sleeping in the Kirk—Dogs in the Kirk—Characters—Chairlie Hogg—"Picker Jock"—Nannie Dornie—Jenny Riddell—Our elders—Personal aspect of religion—Public Rebukes—Services of the Kirk,—Order of service—Hymns and Paraphrases—Choirs—Cantatas—Standing during prayers—Prefacing the Psalm—The Sacrament—Fast day—Open-air services—Visiting ministers—Queer sermons—Rev. "Wattie" Dunlop—Looking back.

## ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
JOHN HYSLOP . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
MASONIC PROCESSION, 1897 . . . . .	13
THE MONUMENT . . . . .	16
ROB . . . . .	24
NELL . . . . .	25
"WULLIE WUD" . . . . .	26
LANGHOLM MARKET PLACE . . . . .	49
CAROLINE STREET COTTAGES . . . . .	54
JOHNIE LINTON . . . . .	119
WILLIE DICK . . . . .	138
TOMMY . . . . .	149
FACSIMILE OF PAGE OF AUTHOR'S MS. . . . .	159
CHAIRLIE HOGG . . . . .	164
STAPELGORTOUN KIRKYARD . . . . .	181
DR. W. J. CARLYLE . . . . .	204
LANGHOLM BRIDGE . . . . .	216
THE FALLEN BRIDGE, BOATFORD . . . . .	220
JOHN IRVING . . . . .	232
PROCLAMATION OF THE FAIR, 1882 . . . . .	241
JAMIE DYER . . . . .	252
ISAAC FLETCHER . . . . .	254
LANGHOLM MERCAT CROSS . . . . .	298
FIRST ISSUE OF "ESKDALE AND LIDDESDALE ADVERTISER" . . . . .	300
THE SOUTER'S STANE . . . . .	305
ROBERT SMELLIE . . . . .	318
TOWN-HEAD KIRK, 1822 . . . . .	332
"PICKER JOCK" . . . . .	340



## CHAPTER I.

### EARLY MEMORIES.

I DID not hear the bells which rang to celebrate the victory of Waterloo, but during my younger years the Peninsular campaign still formed a subject of conversation in many a home in Langholm. I knew several men who had fought with Wellington, and some who had been through the earlier wars of the century, of which Trafalgar was the crowning victory, but of these I shall write presently. These recollections, therefore, touch the greater part of the nineteenth century, and as I sit at the fireside these long winter evenings in the days of my old age, and cast my mind back to some eighty years ago, I often lay down my pen to reflect upon all the changes I have seen. I look forward, too, into that future which I shall not see, and try to forecast all the wonders that my grandchildren may yet behold. How many memories crowd upon my mind as I write ! But at this moment my dominating thought is one of surprise at finding myself thus engaged. At no period of my earlier life did I think that I would come to my 84th year, but my times have been in the hands of Him who seeth the end from the beginning. Nor did I ever for a moment imagine that any recollections of my common-place life could possibly be of interest to anyone except my own kith and kin. I have for many years collected historical and antiquarian information,

most of which is embodied in *Langholm As It Was*, but hitherto I have made no effort to write down any of my own personal reminiscences.

It is, of course, impossible to tell of everything that interested us in those far-off days, but I shall try to recall the Langholm which then was and is no more, and possibly there may be found something worth preserving in the story of the isolated and simple life of our little town.

There is one impression, that was common to us all, which I have had to re-adjust to the actual facts. Everybody in Langholm in my early days felt a very great pride in the thought that it was a very big place. We called it

“THE MUCKLE TOON,”

and would only grudgingly admit that Hawick or Carlisle could be bigger. That old man from the herd's cottage far up in Eskdalemuir, who supposed that “Edinburgh would be just sic another bit as the Langholm—wi' gigs and busses rinnin' about,” was not alone in his ideas of geography. But as I sit here, my mind occupied with memories of vanished days, I see that we were wrong, and instead of its being in the main stream of life, as we thought, Langholm was only as a pool which the flood has left. And yet its people had a life which was all their own, and I faintly suspect that we gave ourselves airs and even boasted of our “muckleness.” This pride was fostered by folk from the outlying parts, who came into the town on Fair and market days. They often seemed a bit bewildered with

the turmoil. I once heard a shepherd, from about the Stenniswater, who was taken to the end of the Boatford Bridge to see Reid and Taylor's workpeople leave the mill, exclaim in amazement, "Weel, that beats a'!" Only at a Common-Riding or a summer Sacrament perhaps had he seen such a crowd. I remember when Auld Ned left the seclusion of Wauchope Schoolhouse and came to live in Wauchope Raw, he confided to me, in answer to my enquiries, that "he liked the Langholm no sae bad—but he thocht that the traffic and commotion in Wauchope Raw would just aboot feenish him." Often in walking down that street this admission of Ned's has come to my memory—and I have smiled!

But though our town was small it was never dull. Visitors, used only to city life, have sometimes remarked to me that life in Langholm, especially in the winter time, must have become slow and monotonous.

#### NO MONOTONY.

I have never been conscious of any such feeling. As I look far back to my boyhood and youth I see a Langholm which was certainly much more quaint, and therefore much more interesting than the Langholm of to-day. The town abounded in "characters," whose sayings and doings formed always a subject of fireside conversation, and provided us with much of our mirth. Stories of the past, letters from afar,—from India or the seas where there were many Langholm lads,—the Kirk, the State, the weather, the crops, and ourselves, were all themes of reminiscence or discussion which never lost their flavour or freshness. Life was hard,

no doubt, but it was exciting to us who were boys in the early thirties. What with the hay and the peats, and the school, we had plenty to do, especially in the summer time, and we were healthy and hardy and did not expect great things. Then we had the Fairs and the Common-Riding, and the Hiring days all full of fun and excitement. We had the hills and woods, and the rivers, too, —unrestricted fishing and guddling— and I do not mind confessing that we also got a glorious pleasure from raiding the orchard at the Milnholm when a chance occurred. In stealing apples we never really felt that we were breaking the Commandments, though sometimes our consciences hinted that, as the little lassie put it, we might be “cracking” them, but Tom Cairns took apples, we argued, and why could not we?

As I glance backward down the long years, I can see what none of us saw then, that many of our customs were old-world and queer,—our manners and dress, and way of looking at things. Our words, too, were of a different tongue from that spoken in Langholm to-day. Some of these may be worth preserving, and part of my purpose in writing down these reminiscences is, to help to do this, as well as to put on record some of the stirring incidents which formed the daily life of Langholm when I was a boy more than 70 years ago. The people seem to me to have been of quite a different type from those of to-day; at least we very<sup>a</sup> rarely see now the quaint and singular personalities who were so plentiful among us two or three generations ago. The coming of the railway up our valley, aided by other influences, has tended to reduce to a common level all the

types that once flourished among us. It used to be jocularly said that we could easily identify, say, a Hawick man, —by his singular modesty concerning his native town, and by other less pronounced peculiarities

but to-day there is no visible difference between him and his Langholm neighbour. This levelling, I think, has tended to decrease the interest which Langholm once afforded, and to render it less picturesque than it was in the days of my youth.

#### LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS.

Then when we foregathered round the blazing peat fire of a winter's night what tales were told! Legends and traditions of the old Border days, the recital of the literature of that stirring time, reading the newspaper aloud, and the anecdotes of this or that local worthy, filled the night with amusement and interest. The newspaper reading was a great event. The papers were too expensive for one man to buy regularly, so they were bought on the co-operative principle, and the partners went to each other's houses to hear the reading. What with the arguing about the pronunciation of the foreign words, or discussing the politics of the day, or the strange news from a far country, the gathering was always an exciting one. On one of these occasions it was noticed that the selected reader introduced the same word an extraordinary number of times. Some of the listeners began to wonder at this, but had not the courage to interfere. At length one of the bolder spirits ventured to remark: "Wullie, that word 'gambie' seems to come in awfu' often—what does it mean?" Wullie mumbled

some reply, and then it was discovered that whenever he had come across a word of whose pronunciation he was uncertain, he had substituted "gambie," considerably to the confusion of the narrative. The word had been originally applied, as a nickname, to a family in Langholm, the inheritors of a considerable estate from Dr. Laidlaw, who when stationed on the river Gambia, West Africa, was the friend and benefactor of Mungo Park, the famous African traveller.

#### IN THE WEAVING SHOPS.

What stories we heard during the long foresuppers !\* One of the greatest pleasures I experienced when a boy was to be allowed to sit in the weaving shops listening to the intelligent conversation of the weavers, which ranged over a large area—politics, religion, adventure and folk-lore, as well as the banter and small talk of the town. I remember the discussion turning one night on Concentration of Mind. One weaver declared that he had so schooled himself that he could just go into the kirk and forget absolutely everything but the service, and afterwards repeat most of the sermon. This completely took the others by surprise, for they had not specially observed Johnie's powers of concentration. They invited him to prove his claim by giving them, next Monday, the gist of the minister's sermon. But when the Monday came Johnie was a humbler man. He made full confession before the shop: "When A' gaed intae the kirk," he said, "A' juist thocht what a big bit it was—what an awfu' lot o' looms

\* The part of the evening between tea and supper was so named.



it wud haud, and A' was sae busy fitting the looms intae the building that A' fair forgot tae listen to the sermon." To round off his confession Johnie quoted the text about pride going before a fall, on which one of the weavers declared that he had "got that bit frae 'Tom Cairns."

Another treat which I appreciated greatly was to be allowed to spend an evening in Aitchison, the clogger's shop. It was from this shop Tom Cairns got his clogs—and big ones they were: "Aberdeens" we called them—until he unexpectedly transferred his custom to the clogger at Westerkirk. When asked for an explanation, Tom replied that he had gone to Westerkirk because "auld Aitchison didna make fashionable clogs." A strange company assembled nightly here. My right of presence would probably be obtained by the excuse of my clogs requiring a new calker, and I won an extension of time by keeping the fire well supplied with the "spielings" from the newly-cut clog soles. The fire and one or two tallow candles gave the only light in the shop. One old man whom I well remember being present on most of these evenings, was

"HALF-A-CROON ANDRA,"

so named because of his partiality for that specimen of the currency. Andra had worked as a lad on the Meikleholm Farm before the New-town of Langholm was built upon its land. He remembered the building of the first houses, and was always loud in his praise of "Good Duke Henry," for his consideration towards the cottars. Andra had often crossed the Wauchope by the "Roman" bridge at the Manse, which was pulled down

in 1793 by the parish minister. He had a large store of anecdote and story, and I can yet recall his graphic description of the Genial Blast of 1794. Like many old folk in Langholm he was much more reliable than a weather-glass in indicating the changes in the weather, and people consulted him whether they should "shake oot" or "kyle" the hay. I was much impressed by his description of a water-spout which fell on Warbla Hill in 1816. The day had been warm and sultry and the storm broke suddenly. The volume of water pouring down the hillside must, according to Andra's account, have been two feet deep,—a figure I quote, without expressing any settled conviction as to its accuracy. Wauchope Water came down in high flood, but it was on the eastern side of the hill that the greatest damage was done. The torrent swept shrubs and brushwood before it, and all the small footbridges in the Dean Banks were carried away.

Another old man, a frequenter of the clog-shop, confirmed Andra's story. He was working at the time at the paper mill, near the Skipper's Bridge, now the distillery. Rain began to fall, but in no abnormal quantity. He took shelter in one of the lofts, and was presently surprised to see the Esk come down in heavy flood, and the wooden bridge leading over the Wauchope to Stubholm sweep past in one piece. It broke up on the rocks at the Skipper's. The usual Dean Banks traffic had to be diverted to the Tarras Road.

#### THE REFORM BILL.

One of my earliest recollections is of taking part in

the procession to celebrate the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832. Great interest was shown in Langholm in the fate of this measure, and when the news came of its having been passed, a series of rejoicings was arranged. I was only a small boy at the time, but, even at this moment, the whole event is clearly mirrored in my mind. There was a great demonstration organized for 10th August, and even the lads and lassies were given a place in it. We boys had to wear blue bows and the lassies had blue sashes or ribbons. Among these lassies was one Janet McVittie, who that day walked from and to Fiddleton in Ewes, a distance of sixteen miles, to take part in the great celebration. It was many years afterwards, when she had become my wife, that I first learned this.

The town was gay with triumphal arches and other decorations. There had been some dispute concerning the best site for the grand arch, and the committee decided to have it just at the north entrance to the Market-place, from what was called Mrs. Irving's corner, that is, where Mr. Malcolm's shop now is, to the Globe Inn, which then occupied the site of Mrs. Latimer's shop. The rival site, advocated mostly by the people living in its neighbourhood and in the New-town, was at the Town-head, between the houses of Peter Telford and Alexander Hotson, my great uncle. The decision to erect this second arch was made only at the last moment, and so it had to be built up in one night. Gardens all over the New-town were laid under contribution, and brushwood and other material commandeered. Those who could not provide material, wil-

lingly gave money, and the arch turned out to be a complete success. The guard and driver of the royal mail coach declared it to be the finest they had seen on their journeyings, a compliment, which, though probably paid to other towns as well, gave lively satisfaction to the builders. I fear I can only give an imperfect idea of what it was like. There was, I remember, a large main arch with a smaller one at each side. In the chimneys of the thatched houses on either side of the street there was set large fir trees, on one a pheasant perched and on the other a blackcock, and from the trees to the centre of the arch, which was surmounted by a floral crown, festoons of flowers were arranged, and the top of the arch was battlemented. Behind a bush of heather a fox was set, as if in the act of crossing to seize the blackcock or the pheasant.

The procession started from the Kilngreen and marched to the Watch Knowe, where often I fancy the signal fires had blazed on many an exciting night in Border story. It numbered about 1,000 people, including 200 boys of whom I was one. Every trade was represented and carried its banner. Strong contingents also came from Ewes, Westerkirk, and Canonby. On their arrival at the Watch Knowe, the processionists formed a circle and cheered for the King, Grey, Brougham, Russell, and Reform. Refreshments were served, and then the procession was re-formed and returned to the Market-place, where a huge platform had been erected. The Rev. John Dobie of the Town-head church was called to the chair, and delivered an eloquent oration on the cause of the rejoicing. The enthusiasm was not unani-

mous, of course. The parish minister so strongly disapproved of the proceedings, that on the following Sunday, when the arch at the Town-head was still up, he declined to pass under it. As the parish kirk was then on the hill-side, his usual route was by the Well Close, at the top of which stood the cottage which served as the Session house, but on this occasion he went round by the Bar Brae, and thereby comforted his conscience. He also severed his connection with the Eskdale Kilwinning Lodge of Free Masons, of which he was chaplain, because the members had taken part in the procession. As perhaps the oldest Mason now in the Lodge I think the minister had the best of this side of the question, as it is against all the canons of Masonry to take part in regalia in a purely political demonstration, such as this was.

It is interesting to know that, whilst the great Reform agitation was in progress, a native of Langholm, Mr. Walter Scott, was secretary of the Reform Club, then one of the two largest political clubs in London. Mr. Scott, who was by profession a barrister-at-law, was born at Clinthead.\* In his official capacity he was brought into contact with most of the leading Whig statesmen of the Reform era. After leaving Edinburgh University Mr. Scott had gone to London, entering the office of Mr. Joseph Hume, the well-known writer and publicist, who at that time sat for Weymouth. In this

\* A nephew of Mr. Scott, Mr. C. Henderson Scott, who also was born at Clinthead, but whilst yet a child removed to London, was called to the bar in 1874. He collaborated with Mr. C. Marsh Dennison in producing a book on the practice in the House of Lords. He died in 1908.

connection Mr. Scott was brought into the famous dispute between Disraeli and Hume. It will be remembered that the former contested Wycombe in the Whig interest. On being returned as a Tory for some other constituency, Disraeli attacked his old allies, who of course retaliated. He denied that he had sought Hume's assistance at Wycombe, and I have before me now a copy of a letter written by Mr. Scott, giving an account of the interview, at which he was present, in Mr. Hume's office when Mr. Disraeli called.

Previous to the opening of the Reform Club, Mr. Scott had the honour of showing the Prince Consort over the premises. This was shortly before his marriage to the Queen. To this notable event Mr. and Mrs. Scott received an invitation. They attended the ceremony, and had an excellent view of the Queen and the Prince. Mr. Scott died in 1848 at the early age of 38, having been secretary of the Reform Club for 12 years.

#### MY LAST PROCESSION.

The Reform Bill procession was the first in which I had a part, my age at that date being five, the last took place 65 years later, on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of the late Queen Victoria, when I walked with the Eskdale Kilwinning Lodge, as shown opposite.

My life therefore touches five reigns—George IV., William IV., Victoria, Edward VII., and George V. I can only faintly recall the accession of William IV., but of course I remember quite clearly that of Queen Victoria. The enthusiasm for the young Queen was increased by the contempt and disgust with which the bulk of the people



MASONIC PROCESSION, DIAMOND JUBILEE, 1897.

had regarded the two previous reigns. But my recollection is that there was a more restrained demonstration of loyalty and far less fuss made throughout the country than we saw at the Queen's Jubilees in 1887 and 1897. Greatly as I admired the lofty character of the Queen, and respect the present and previous occupants of the throne, I have a feeling that the recent adulation has been over-done ; and I have been reminded, when reading all the profuse ascriptions of greatness poured out by the press, of what auld Lancie Armstrong said when he read of the coronation of one of the Emperors of Russia. Lancie read the story without comment, but when he finished it he laid aside the paper with the remark : " It's a queer thing to me if the Emperor doesna get six weeks at the grass like auld Nebuchadnezzar."

#### THE CHOLERA.

Writing of 1832 recalls another notable happening of that memorable year,—the coming of the cholera into this country. It broke out first in Sunderland, brought there probably by ships trading to the East, and after ravaging that town spread quickly over the entire country. Thanks to its comparative isolation, Langholm escaped this dreaded visitation. Great terror, however, existed, and I remember Half-a-croon Andra carrying disinfectants round the town — some concoction in a barrel, which he stirred up at intervals with a long pole, and which gave out a most offensive odour.

#### THE MONUMENT.

Another event of my early boyhood which was im-



pressed upon my memory was the completion of the Monument to Sir John Malcolm which so splendidly crowns the summit of Whita. There are many monuments, but to a Langholm man this is *the* Monument.

It is, perhaps, the most conspicuous landmark on the Borders. It can be seen from a distance of 30 miles, and he who knows not Langholm Monument, knows not the western Borderland. Towards it are strained the eyes of Eskdale men and women who return from afar,—from the busy world which throbs somewhere out beyond the circle of our quiet hills,—to catch the first glimpse of the old home-land, where once more they will look into sympathetic eyes and listen to the music of their mother-tongue.

I had been present at the laying of the foundation stone by Sir James Graham, of Netherby, and was also there when the work was completed. For a short time my father, and, I believe, some of my uncles and great-uncles (for most of them, Hyslops and Hotsons alike, were builders) helped in its erection. Very naturally, therefore, it formed the subject of many an interesting talk in our home.

The building was begun in 1835 and completed within the year. Practical men will appreciate the difficulties of the work when I mention that the Monument itself is 100 feet high and stands upon the summit of Whita Hill, some 1,200 feet above sea level. Apart from the man it commemorated, the work itself excited very considerable interest throughout the Border country. The monument was designed by Robert Howe, and built entirely by local men. Naturally there were very serious



THE MONUMENT.

difficulties to be faced in the erection, but they were all successfully overcome by the practical genius of the builder, Mr. Thomas Slacks, who, in recognition of his achievement, received a gold medal from a Society in London.

#### THE TOP STONE.

I remember that when the top stone was laid into its bed some of the spectators raised a cheer. I was beside Mr. Slacks at the moment and heard him sternly rebuke the onlookers, saying there must be no cheering until the workman was safely down. The last man to come down was Mr. Slacks' assistant, John Clark, to whom a share of the credit is due. When Clark was safely down, the scaffolding was removed by another device of Mr. Slacks. It fell without injury either to any of the men or to the structure itself, and then there arose a cheer which resounded across Tarras Moss and penetrated into Ewesdale, Eskdale, and Wauchopedale. It was a great moment, and I have always felt gratified that I was present on an occasion so memorable and historic.

#### HOGG'S MONUMENT.

It may not be out of place to say here that I also saw removed from Whita Hill the block of sandstone for the monument to James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, on the shore of "still Mary's Lake," in Yarrow. The stone measured 4 feet 10 inches by 3 feet 8 inches at the base, and its estimated weight was 6 tons. It was removed from the quarry and brought, without mishap, down

the Kirkwynd. On the first day, 24th November, 1859, they only succeeded in moving it about 100 yards. On the following day horse power was abandoned for manual labour, which was given by a large number of willing helpers. With their assistance the stone was brought down its rugged journey to the Market-place, where its arrival was hailed with great cheering. And now, carved into the shepherd's likeness it stands amid Yarrow's "dowie dens."

I recall at the moment another event Andra often talked about, over that clog-shop fire; and with this I shall end the present chapter. The incident took place on the Peat hill on Warbla. A man and his wife were busy one day casting peats when a thunderstorm broke over the hill. To shelter from the rain they took refuge under the same plaid, and later both were found dead—struck by lightning.

With such narratives as these, did the old men beguile the hours of the long winter nights, whilst I listened, sometimes amused and sometimes awestruck by their strange tales. It was from Andra that I gathered not a little of my information concerning old Langholm, and I believe it was his old-world stories which first excited my interest in the history of my native town. Part, at least, of that information I am now trying to set down on paper, where it certainly has never been before.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE OLD BORDER SPIRIT.

I HAVE already referred to the stories of the Peninsular War and its campaigns with which, in my early years, we were made familiar, and on recalling those days it is impressed upon me how largely such subjects bulked in the fireside talk of our homes. There cannot then have been many families in Langholm who had not one, and often more, of its members in the Army or the Navy. And it occurs to me, whilst I am writing these notes, that this feature of Eskdale life may have been due in part to the old warlike spirit which had been transmitted from our Border clans. I have heard it claimed that the Borderers, trained by centuries of tumult, were amongst the bravest of our country's fighting forces, and certainly, there were not a few of our Langholm men,

#### OLD CAMPAIGNERS

who had been in many wars, and in my youthful days stories of battles by sea and land were among the commonest subjects of our conversation. The example and influence of Eskdale men, such as the Pasleys, Malcolms, and Littles, who had done nobly for their country, were no doubt a great stimulus to our patriotic fervour.

I can well remember how, in my own circle of

relatives, we were all thrilled with what we heard of the adventures of one of my great-uncles in the wars against the first Napoleon. This uncle, James Hyslop, had been dead some years before my time, but his letters were still greatly prized in the family, and we boys read them as we read a romance. He was Captain's clerk, and afterwards Purser, in various men-o'-war—the "Hope," the "Camel," the "Tremendous," and the "Shannon." Through the interest of Admiral Sir Thomas Pasley my relative obtained the privilege of being placed by Lord Spencer on his list of recommendations, but his promising career was cut short by his ship, the "Shannon," being captured by the French. It was wrecked on 10th December, 1803, off La Hogue, and the crew were seized by the French and kept as prisoners. My uncle wrote home to Langholm from Caen informing his relatives of his safety, and even now I recall the pride we boys felt in his story. He was soon moved to Verdun, where there was a large number of British prisoners. His letters from Verdun make interesting reading even yet, and one sees how his thoughts continually turned to Eskdale. In glancing through these old letters one sentence, which has just caught my eye, recalls a story I often heard in my early years. The sentence is, "When did you hear from Walter? Is he likely to remain in Jamaica for some time?" The story is that Walter Hyslop was leaving Langholm to settle in Jamaica, and on the night before his departure he went round among his friends to bid them good-bye. It was a very dark night and there was then scarcely any light in the streets.

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When turning into the Pot-market, at Carruthers's Corner, he failed to see an open drain, and stumbling into it broke his leg. Of course he could not sail as arranged, and many were the lamentations of himself and his relatives at this piece of evil fortune. The disappointment, however, was soon turned into thankfulness, for word came that the vessel, in which his passage had been taken, had foundered on the voyage, and every soul on board been lost. Over and over again, the letters said, rumours had reached the captives of an exchange of prisoners, but during the period covered by the letters, this hope had not been realized.

#### LOCAL PATRIOTISM.

The military fervour of the early years of the century was very marked, but it was not entirely spontaneous. Owing to the fear of an invasion by Napoleon, a large force of Militia had to be organised, and the contingents were to be raised in proportion to the population. The Act establishing the Militia was very unpopular in many parts of the country, and riots occurred. All able-bodied men between the ages of 19 and 23 were first called up. Dumfriesshire had to provide 246 men. From Eskdalemuir the quota was two men, but the parish collected money and found substitutes. Voluntary subscriptions were also invited by the Government, and the following sums were sent by Eskdale parishes: Langholm, £97 8s. 6d.; Ewes, £68 14s. 0d.; Westerkirk, £54 4s. 9d.; Canonby, £41 11s. 10d.; Eskdalemuir, £31 14s. 6d.—Total, £293 13s. 7d.

## BLIN' BOB.

Many men from Langholm and the district volunteered, and I remember several who had come home from the long-continued wars, halt or blind. One such was "Blin' Bob," a great strapping fellow, who had lost his sight from the sandstorms in Egypt, during the Nile campaign. For this he received a pension, and also an allowance for a boy to lead him about. When these were made certain, Bob dismissed the boy and married a wife, who took care of him, and the two of them became an institution of the town. Very graphic were the stories Bob told, and though we sometimes doubted their strict truth, yet they entertained us well. He was a rare hand with the fiddle, and his performances were quite a feature of the amusements in his neighbourhood. Bob was, to use a present day expression, a well-groomed man, though in my young days we only applied the epithet to horses, and his morning ablutions were a matter of knowledge and interest to the entire neighbourhood. What it was that Bob did, I never definitely knew, but though he performed the ceremony in his back garden, the greater part of the street was conscious of the event, and we had sometimes to explain to strangers who wondered at the noise, that "it was only Blin' Bob weshin' hissel." It would not, perhaps, be in very good taste if I were to describe Bob's methods in detail, but they excited the envy and unqualified admiration of every boy in the neighbourhood, and many were the attempts we made to copy his finishing touches. We all had the feeling that Blin' Bob rather overdid this washing business. His practice was in vivid contrast



to that of a great many in the community. There was an old man, a distant relative of my own, who did not share Bob's views on the benefit to be got from cold water. He had a fairly good wash every Saturday afternoon, though sometimes he demurred even to this as unnecessary, but in the ordinary way he washed his face but once a day. He was an awkward man—as we expressed it in Langholm, he always went by “Carretrig to Car’le”—the longest way round. If he wished to scratch his left ear he did it by reaching his right hand round the back of his head, and in washing himself he persisted in using one of those long, narrow, quart tins, into which by a little dexterity he could get only one hand,—and the tin ran out. His women folk often declared they “felt black burning shame” at his appearance, but in reply he would just give his face a rub over with his hand, only aggravating matters thereby, and declare that his “was juist as clean as a vast o’ faces.”

#### ROB AND NELL.

A later campaigner was “Armless Rob.” Rob lost an arm at the siege of San Sebastian, and then retired to Moodlawpoint to carry on a less dangerous but longer continued warfare in words with his gude-wife, Nell.

A queer couple they were. Owing to these domestic squabbles Rob one day attempted suicide, and nearly succeeded. The place selected was “Chick’s Pool” in Wauchope, near Besse Bell’s Brae, so called as a compliment to Rob, “Chick” being one of his “to-names.” He was rescued and restored to Nell by my uncle, Tom McVittie, who also, curiously enough, had but one arm,

having lost the other on a less warlike field than San Sebastian. Rob and Nell occupied the lower part of a house looking on to Moodlawpoint. They frequently



ROB.

transferred their domestic disputes to the square, with the boys as a kind of jury, and these rows were quite as popular as football. Nell herself was not lacking in a certain vigour of mind as well as of body. I do

not think I ever heard the argument for a future life more epigrammatically put than was Nell's comment on Pete Johnson's scepticism. Pete, who was a hawker of crockery—most of it “gleyed,” and very unsteady—had



NELL.

some pretensions as a poet, and affected “liberal” views in theology. He had hinted in one of his poetical pieces his doubts as to the reality of a future state, and had portrayed “the Deevil” in quite a complimentary way, which greatly shocked the gude-wives about Moodlaw-

point. "Pete Johnson says there's nae hereafter," said Nell, who, being deaf, always shouted the conversation, "but my faith, he'll fin' oot whether or no!" And as was her persistent habit, she wiped her eyes with the



"WULLIE WUD."

corner of her "check" apron. Nell always wore a spotless white "mutch," and she was one of the few old women in Langholm who smoked a clay pipe.

The upper portion of this domestic haven was occupied by Wullie Wud, and, strange as it may appear, he too had only one arm. Wullie, whose portrait I am able to give, was a splendid hand at making "nibbies," to whose gnarled appearance I always fancied he bore a striking resemblance.

#### KILLED BY A COW !

Perhaps the most remarkable of these veterans of the Peninsular War was Simon Fletcher, who was present at Waterloo and other 31 engagements in various countries.\* Simon was dead before I was born. I have often heard the story of how he met his death. Coming through perils many, from shot and shell and fever, he died from the effects of being knocked down by a cow on Langholm Bridge. On his deathbed he often deplored this unheroic termination of his dashing career, and was heard to mutter in contemptuous tones, "To be killed by a cow !"

#### OLD CORUNNA.

Another Peninsular hero was James Scott, who died in 1868, and was given a military funeral, one of the few which Langholm has witnessed. He was known as "Old Corunna," and after he had returned from the wars and settled down in Langholm, there sprang up a legend—never entirely accepted by his own relatives however

\* His tombstone in Langholm Kirkyard has the following inscription:—"Simon Fletcher, pensioner from the 1st Royal Dragoons, in which he had served 21 years in Great Britain, Ireland, Holland, Portugal, Spain, and France, where he fought in 32 battles including Waterloo. He died February 4th, 1824, aged 45 years."

- that he had carried the lantern at the burial of Sir John Moore, to whose Staff, by the way, Sir Charles Pasley, another son of Eskdale of whose career we are all proud, was attached. It is very remarkable how often, since Scott's death, I have seen in the papers, notices of the death of men who claimed to have carried that lantern. If all the claims are good, the burial must have resembled a torchlight procession! But I think there is no doubt of Scott's being actually present when they buried their heroic commander—"darkly, at dead of night." He had many thrilling stories to tell of the battles in which he had taken part.

In my list I might mention also Christopher Borthwick, a Langholm man, who was present at the Battle of Trafalgar, and died at Westerkirk in 1860; and Tommy Tinning, or Tinnie, as he was often called, an old Crimean campaigner. It was after him that the town's cannon was called "Tommy Tinnie" about the year 1856. It was told of Tommy that one day, he was passing along Broadway in New York when he suddenly remembered that it was Langholm Common-Riding Day. He at once mounted a barrel standing at a shop door and "cried the Fair" to the amazed and amused Yankees.

Of course, as I have already hinted, much of the patriotic spirit then shown in Langholm had its origin in the fame of the Pasleys and Malcolms. The renown of Sir Thomas Pasley, Sir Pulteney, Sir James and Sir Charles Malcolm, all of them Knights of Eskdale, drew not a few Eskdale men into the naval service, and in all of them these famous Admirals ever showed a warm

and practical interest. Sir John Malcolm's fame drew others into the Indian service, whilst Sir Charles Pasley, of the Royal Engineers, also exerted his influence on behalf of Eskdale lads.

There was, in my own family, another sailor whose adventurous life was a kind of romance to us all. My father's brother John, was, at first, the Captain's clerk on board the "Esk," a post secured for him by the influence of Sir Chas. Pasley, -whose letter to my grandmother announcing the appointment is on the desk beside me as I write, -and afterwards he was a purser in the Indian Navy. I can remember the excitement there was when his letters from India arrived. The interest was not confined to our own immediate circle, for when he delivered the letter, on which there was usually a postage fee of about five shillings to pay, the postman would say, "A's see whae that's frae ; a'll juist wait and hear how Johnie is " My grandmother did not like this, for the letters contained many references to domestic matters, and, glancing through the letter, she would reply, "Oh, Johnie's juist rale weel," and with this scant information the postman had generally to be content. In these letters, my uncle gave us many glimpses into India that land of many mysteries which to Langholm youths has ever possessed a wonderful attraction. But his career was short. He died in Bombay in 1841, at the age of 36. One of these letters describes visits he paid to Thebes, and to Mount Sinai and Mount Horeb. The heat on the desert journey was intolerable, and made him envy the people of Langholm, who were so near "the sweet Esk." The letter then relates in a graphic man-

ner, a visit to Sinai. The route lay "through rugged defiles and over bare hills—the scene of desolations." His party were entertained at the monastery of St. Catherine, kept by Fathers of the Greek Church. The letter tells how, owing to fear of the wild Arab tribes, there was no ground entrance to the monastery, and the visitors had to be "hoisted up about 40 feet, by means of a pulley, and then hauled in by the monks, like a bale of soft goods into a warehouse." Here, there is a chapel built, the monks said, on the spot where Moses saw the Burning Bush. Then, up the mountain, they came to the plateau which divides Sinai from Horeb, and he saw the Well of Moses and Elijah's cave from the entering in of which the prophet witnessed the whirlwind and the fire, and with his face wrapped in his mantle, heard the Still Small Voice. My uncle told, in a letter to his mother, how he scrambled up the rock at the entrance to the cave, and there carved upon it the names of his mother and brothers and sisters. I mention all this because, as can be easily understood, these letters telling of a visit by someone from our own little community to the actual scene where Moses stepped aside, "to see this great sight," and where he received the Law, and to Elijah's cave, all of which we had heard mentioned from the pulpit so often and read about in the Bible, were of too great interest to be kept only within the family circle. As a matter of fact they were put into general circulation through the town. We never ceased to wonder at this marvel, and it formed the theme of many a Sunday evening's talk, and also inspired the day-dreams of not a few of us boys.



Another letter before me now, is from Dr. Graham of Holmfoot, whose descendant, Lieut.-General Graham so distinguished himself in the Crimea and in the Egyptian campaign of 1882. It is a sad letter. I well remember the consternation and dismay it aroused, when it was handed in to my grandmother, one day in July, 1841. It was to announce the death of her son in Bombay on 19th May, 1841; and told all the details of his illness and last moments. Dr. Graham says he often spoke of Langholm, of his mother and relatives, and also of the deeper concerns of the soul. The letter then went on to tell how he was buried with military honours. "The coffin was covered with white and borne to the churchyard by the marines, and four Indian navy officers with white satin weepers across their shoulders carried the pall. Captain Oliver, the Superintendent of the Navy, officers and midshipmen followed, and in the rear the military officers. The coffin was preceded by 100 Sepoys and officers with reversed arms, and the garrison band played the *Dead March*. . . ."

"I need not mention," Dr. Graham continues, "how much your son was esteemed by all people in Bombay. Captain Oliver was speaking of him to me in the highest terms, and his loss as a public servant and accountant will be much felt."

I have dwelt upon these matters, perhaps in too great detail, but have done so in order to give some idea of the "atmosphere" in which my early years were passed. The roving temperament of the old Borderers seemed to be then much more easily traceable in the men of Eskdale than it is to-day, and the interest created by

the news of how these and other men fared in the great world beyond our quiet hills was a powerful inspiration to very many of us at home.

AULD TIB.

Coming to a later time, the same spirit revealed itself throughout the days of the Crimean War. I recall one curious illustration of this military enthusiasm. In a back street near to Moodlawpoint there lived a decrepit lonely old woman known as "Auld Tib," whose one enthusiasm in life was the Army. "Splendid fellows," she said, all the soldiers were. Day after day throughout the Franco-German War, she came to read my *Scotsman* to see "how the brave lads" were doing. To her every man of them was a hero, and she, who had not one, declared that if she had twenty sons they should all be soldiers!

It was, perhaps, due to Auld Tib's example that a woman, living near her, was wont to summon her bairns from their street-play, in much the same tone as she might have drilled a brigade. I remember seeing her one night dragging home, "by the scruff of the neck," her little boy, whose bed-time had evidently come. Boy-like, he was resisting, even unto tears, and she, with a set face and with determination in her tone, was calling upon him to "surrender"!

During all the wars of the century earnest discussions arose, especially amongst the weavers, on matters of strategy and administration. As may be imagined, some very humorous comments were made. One of these is perhaps worth recording. It was, I fancy, a near

relative of the Duke of Buccleuch who, being on active service, was mentioned, not "in the despatches," but in the newspapers, as being attached to the commissariat department. There was considerable mistiness among the weavers as to what precisely this meant. Various suggestions, most of them very wide of the mark, were made as to what the duties of the Duke's relative could be. It fell to Lantie Armstrong to settle the question: "As far as A' can understand," he said, "his work is tae dreep the tatties and a' that kind o' thing!"\*

These discussions in the weaving shops were often very amusing. It required little persuasion at any time for a weaver to throw off his apron and leave the loom, and it often fell to myself to be called upon to arbitrate in some curious dispute. I happened to possess *Chambers' Encyclopædia*, a book of reference I have ever valued, and it was to it, and of course not to me personally that they appealed. Perhaps I would be sitting of an evening reading the *Scotsman*, when, without ceremony of any kind, three or four of the weavers would walk in, one of them remarking as he took a chair, "Man, John, look up the book." And the tone in which these words were uttered, indicated to me how keen had been the discussion and the disagreement.

The weavers were greatly interested in the expeditions to discover the North Pole, and often in meal hours this theme monopolised their talk. This rather wearied one of them, whose knowledge of geography was as limited as Chairlie Hogg's, who thought the world was bound-

\* "Dreeping" is pouring off the water from the potatoes when they have been sufficiently boiled.

ed by "the Kirkstile, Henwoll, and the Rashiel," and at last he gave vent to his annoyance. "Howt, deverification!" he exclaimed, "wherever ye gaun its North Pole, North Pole. A've nae patience wi' sic nonsense. How'd they ken there's a pole if they ha'ena been?" Then the weavers idled off to their looms.

#### PRESS-GANG.

There was, however, one feature of this warlike spirit which did not commend itself to our Border independence. This was the press-gang. Occasionally, parties came to Langholm to obtain recruits for the King's service, and their persuasions were, of course, resisted. A suspicion arose that the parish ministers were supplying to the Government lists of eligible young men, and for a while this made them decidedly unpopular. An exciting incident occurred one day near to where we lived. A strapping youth got a hint that the press-gang were on his track. He lived in what was then known as Manse Street, but which after the streets were re-named in 1868, was called Caroline Street. Hearing they were coming, he barricaded himself in the cottage, and when the gang appeared they met with a stubborn resistance. The siege continued for a considerable time, until at last the young man saw his capture was inevitable. He therefore resolved on a bold dash for liberty. He got out by a back window, without being at the moment observed. Down the garden towards Wauchope he ran, and made for the Stubholm Wood, where he knew there was plenty of cover. The men soon saw him and pursued, but he had already reached

the plantation and they failed to catch him. His victory was extremely popular. The incident was given chief place in the "crack" of the town for several days.

#### BATTLE OF THE COOPS.

One of the most stirring tales I heard in Aitchison's clog-shop of a winter night was told by Half-a-Croon Andra, who called it "The Battle of the Coops." It was "fought" in 1783. The laird of Netherby had caused to be constructed across the Esk, where it ran through his policies, a stone and timber barrier, which prevented the fish swimming to the higher reaches of the river. The people of Canonby, Langholm, Westerkirk, and Eskdalemuir were thus deprived of their supply of fish, which, poor innocent souls, they regarded as the gift of Providence to all and not to lairds alone. They upheld the doctrine of the Elect in theology, but could not accept it so readily in economics—perhaps one phase of the doctrine was sufficient for so unsophisticated a community! They refused to take the interference of the laird of Netherby without a protest, and so it came to pass that with the same grit which distinguished their forefathers, they determined to resist even to the shedding of blood. There was a swift and general rising of both men and women from the head of Eskdale even to the gates of Netherby Ha'. From every farm-house and shepherd's or ploughman's cot they came, armed with all manner of weapons, firearms included, for this was a matter as serious, and must be dealt with as promptly, as any Border raid in the olden days. Scythe blades fastened to poles, pitch forks, and even the

humble "nibbie" were requisitioned. Thus equipped the host set out for Netherby.

Sir Walter Scott might well have had this incident in his mind when he wrote the ballad in *The Monastery* :—

"March! march! Ettrick and Teviotdale,  
 Why the deil dinna ye march forward in order?  
 March! march! Eskdale and Liddesdale,  
 All the blue bonnets are bound for the Border.

. . . . .

Come from your hills where the hirsels are grazing,  
 Come from the glen of the buck and the roe;  
 Come to the crag where the bracken is blazing,  
 Come with the buckler, the lance, and the bow.  
     Trumpets are sounding,  
     War steeds are bounding,  
 Stand to your arms and march in good order,  
     England shall many a day  
     Tell of the bloody fray  
 When the blue bonnets came over the Border."

Word had been sent of the approach of the dalesmen, and they were met, on the English side, by a body of infantry from Carlisle barracks, drawn up as in battle. But military tactics were not wanting on the part of the dalesmen. Many of them were old pensioners who had seen active service, and they, too, had rifles and ammunition.

Now the forces face each other across the Esk. The invaders are loading their muskets. This is to cover the main attack, for the civilian members of the force are already attacking the "coops." The honour of leading the assault has fallen to Johnie Foster, who is even now on the barrier with crow-bar in hand, covered by the loaded weapons of the pensioners. It is a critical moment. Will the infantry attack? If so, the

pensioners will open fire and then, God defend the right! But no blood is spilt. In a very few moments a breach is made in the barrier, the "coops" are destroyed, and the Esk once again rolls freely to the Solway. The battle has been fought and won without a shot having being fired.

Never again did the laird of Netherby attempt to erect the barrier.\* It will be seen from the footnote that this effectual settlement brought to an end the dispute of 300 years. As was fitting, a ballad was written to commemorate this Border story, and it obtained much popularity in Eskdale. I have often heard my grandmother recite it with great animation, aroused probably by the fact that her brother, an Armstrong with the Border blood strong within him, took part in the

\* Hutchinson's *History of Cumberland* refers to this incident, and describes the dalesmen as "a large body of disorderly men to the number of at least of 200, consisting chiefly of the militia, who had been disbanded from the Duke of Buccleuch's regiment of South Fencibles." The writer is good enough to absolve his Grace ("Good Duke Henry") of all knowledge of or sympathy with the raid.

This "Battle of the Coops" was the last of several such affrays. Mr. R. Bruce Armstrong (*History of Liddesdale, &c.*, p. 171) mentions that as early as 1474 the fishing question between Cumberland and Dumfriesshire had become acute. The Englishmen had erected a "fish-garth" across the Esk and the Scots had destroyed it. An agreement was made at Westminster that a Commission should visit the locality and collect evidence on the matter, and then give a decision. Negotiations proceeded, but evidently with no definite conclusion, for in 1485 the garth was again constructed by the English and destroyed by the Scots. Matters continued in this unsatisfactory condition until 1491, when it was agreed that damage to the fish-garth should not be held to be an attempt against the peace. In 1502 the dispute was still unsettled, and again Commissioners agreed not to regard the destruction of the garth as a violation of the peace. At various times, and as late as 1543, this was re-affirmed, but the main question remained unsettled.

“battle.” Unfortunately, after these many years, I am unable to recall the words.

#### BATTLE OF THE HAMES.

An incident of a similar nature, which I heard at the clog-shop fire, was called the “Battle of the Hames.”\* This was a brush between the military and the carriers of Langholm. In those days soldiers very frequently passed through Langholm,—the town being on the King’s highway, on the direct route from London to Edinburgh by way of Carlisle. Not only were the soldiers billeted on the inhabitants, but carters and other owners of horses were commandeered for the conveyance of the baggage from one place to another. The range of the Langholm district was from Longtown in the south, to Hawick in the north, and the carters were paid according to scale for either journey. The stipulated weight for each cart was 15 cwt., and, of course, if, by slightly increasing the load in each, the officer could get his baggage conveyed by a smaller number of carts, the saving went into his own pocket. It was this desire for gain which brought about the “Battle of the Hames.” Suspecting a trick, the carters, among whom was my maternal grandfather, Jamie Armstrong, a man of great size and iron physique, demanded that the loads should be weighed. The officer refused, and ordered a cavalry detachment with drawn swords to compel the men to proceed. But, even with the swords flashing around them, the carters, with true

\* The “hame” is that part of a horse’s harness by which the cart chains are attached at the neck.



Border spirit, declined to move. The officer then ordered his men to take charge of the horses and proceed without the carters. This was the signal for the fray. The carters rushed for the horses, removed the hames from their necks, and the rig-widdies from the carts and ran to hide them, helped by their wives and bairns, panic stricken though many of the latter were. The troopers gave chase, and an exciting scene was witnessed. At the height of the disorder the town bell rang, as usual, at six o'clock, for the beginning of the day's work. The soldiery interpreted this as a call to the town to "rise" (as indeed it was, but not in the sense they feared!) and some consternation was noticeable among them. At this juncture the billet-master, old Samuel Wolves, who happened also to be the Duke's officer, appeared, and up to him galloped the captain, demanding with much fluent profanity and great warmth of temper, to know the why and wherefore of the disturbance. To him Sam'l replied, emphasizing his words by vigorous use of his "nibbie," that not a carter would leave Langholm until his cart had been weighed, as the law ordained. "They can demand it," he said, "and I order it!" The effect was instantaneous. Order was at once restored, justice was preserved, and the carters had won the day! A special report of the incident was forwarded to Edinburgh, and the captain, it was understood, received a severe reprimand.

#### "SCOTS WINE."

Anent the passing through Langholm of these regiments I also remember hearing, not of another "tragedy,"

but of a little comedy, that the town witnessed one day. An English regiment, whose soldiers had not previously crossed the Border, halted in Langholm. At that date whisky was much cheaper than it is now, a bottle costing only from 1 3 to 1/6. Not understanding the qualities of our native "wine," the soldiers drank of it as freely as they were wont to drink of the more innocent English beer, with the result that in a very short time Langholm streets were dotted red with soldiers lying helplessly drunk. On the attention of the officers being called to this condition of things, it was found that scarcely was there a soldier left who was sober enough to arrest or attend to their weaker comrades. Some of the heads of the town went to the officers, and, explaining the cause of this extraordinary collapse, interceded successfully on behalf of the men. Next day one of the soldiers described his experiences to a townsman, and spoke admiringly of the "grip" of our national liquor. Never, he declared, had he had such a muddled head, and yet, said he, "I didn't drink more than a quart of the stuff!"

#### LOCAL JEALOUSIES.

In trying to show how the old Border traits lingered in Langholm, even as winter lingers sometimes into the merry month of May, I must not omit a reference to the curious local rivalries which existed, even to quite a recent date. They may have been a survival of the old clan jealousies, and frequently arose from trivial causes. The rivalry between the Border towns engaged in the tweed trade is still notorious, and some excellent stories could be told, say, of the jealousy which, though now

dead, long existed between Langholm and Hawick,—a rivalry shown even in the merits of the brass-bands, in football, cricket, and everything else where rivalry could possibly arise.

I remember that among the weavers it was especially keen. Originating with them in trade jealousy it extended to almost every phase of activity. Even in social life there existed a kind of intuitive suspicion—not as to each other's good faith or integrity, of course, but rather as to the form this local rivalry might at any moment assume. This sensitiveness was piquantly illustrated at one of the Border bowling tournaments,—events which always produced considerable excitement among the weavers, most of whom, by the way, were splendid bowlers. On the night of the match two of the Langholm men were daundering about the hotel, just a little bit dazed with the novelty of the experience.

“A’ daursay Jim,” said John, who had once before stayed in a hotel—which gave him a considerable advantage, “we’d better pit oor boots ootside the door and then they’ll be cleaned i’ the morning.”

“Aye, but A’ll no!” answered Jim, with a glare which, to his acquaintances, always indicated finality, “there’s owre mony Hawick folk about!”

I am quite sure my Hawick friends will forgive me for telling the story: it illustrates my point so admirably.

But this spirit was manifested even amongst “gate-ends” in Langholm. In his introduction to Dr. David Irving’s *History of Scottish Poetry*, General Pasley refers to the hostility between the boys of the New Town and the Old -or Meikleholmers and Langholmers as they

were called. Dr. Irving himself drilled the Langholmers for these contests on the Kilngreen. General Pasley relates how on one occasion the Meikleholmers had penetrated as far into the enemy's camp as the Lake, — the neighbourhood of Rosevale House being so called, — when it was decided to settle the matter by single combat, even as disputes had been settled on the Borders many a time in centuries gone by. But at this critical moment the mother of the Langholm champion appeared and forcibly drove the youthful warrior home, a somewhat ignominious retreat for the warrior bold !

I can remember similar battles between the boys of Buccleuch Square and those of Moodlawpoint. We had a doggerel verse embodying this hostility. It went something like this :—

“ Holm-ery, domery, doon the dam,  
Milk and bread and saut ham.”

Where the sting lay I cannot now well make out, but the calling of these lines after a Square boy was certain to result in a row, in which all the youths of the two localities would speedily and joyfully engage. We had another rhyme which was supposed to display the great superiority of us Langholm folk over those of the other parishes :—

“ Canonby couts is nae couts,  
Eskdale's nane ava,  
Ewes is something like the thing,  
But Langholm beats them a'.”

During the Parliamentary elections of the fifties and sixties, when party feeling ran so high, a parody of these lines was composed, and, if I remember rightly, sung as a taunt by both political parties.

It is amusing now to remember how we town's folk affected a patronizing attitude towards our country cousins, and entertained each other with anecdotes of the "outlandishness" of, say an Eskdalemuir or a Canonby man! Probably the incident never occurred, but often did we Langholm people laugh over the amateur actor who turned the words of the play into the Canonby vernacular. "What!" he exclaimed, "wultă \* dare the Douglas to his teeth? Draw thee sword and defend theesel'!"

One other illustration of the martial spirit of Eskdale: On the night before the final attack was made at the siege of Badajos, four Langholm men foregathered. They well understood the serious work awaiting them on the morrow, and the likelihood of some if not all of them falling in the fight. So their thoughts were of home - of their "ain fouk," of Langholm so far away, nestling so peacefully in the bosom of its hills. They appointed to meet at a certain place after the battle and the survivors were to write to Langholm and tell the story of that day. But only one man kept the tryst--the other three lay dead in the breach.

#### TO-NAMES.

There is only one further aspect of Langholm life in my early years which I need mention as retaining the old custom of the Borders. I refer to the prevalence of to-names, or nicknames. In his *History of Liddesdale, &c.*, Mr. R. Bruce Armstrong, whom I had the pleasure of accompanying when he came to Langholm to examine

\* Wilt thou.

the location of Wauchope Castle, and whose volume contains so much interesting information concerning the Borders, gives a list of to-names which he appears to have culled from State papers and other documents. The following, however, were in daily use in my earlier years, and some have survived to the present generation :—

The Spider, Ben Block, Currants, Clink, Bamse, The Gommeral, Tippie Jamie, Lord Pompus, The Laird, Little Fashionables, Balmawhapple, Lord Limpit, Noosie, Pigem, Peggy's Sandie, Betty's Robie, Betty's Robie's Jamie,\* The Parent, The Diamond, Kitty's Johnie, Old Pot Metal, The Cannie Article, Pood Pood, Too Too, Doodoo, The Thrasher, The Crusher, The Dad, The Brave Fal-low, Cat Eggs, Cat Tails, The Bottle, The Sheriff, The Craw, The Primrose, The Dry Ask, The Ped-lar, The Scorpion, The Whip, The Jaffuler, Whustle, Big Rob, Little Rob, The Muircock.

I ought to add that these to-names, unlike many to which Mr. Armstrong refers, were not used in any offensive sense, and probably not one of their bearers but would at once have responded to his own, without any thought of resentment. When I come to think of it, there were very few people to whom was given the title of "Mister," and we all called each other by our Christian names. If my memory serves me well, titles only came in with the School Board.

\* It was Jamie, I believe, who taught many of the mysteries of his art to "Professor" Anderson, the famous conjurer, popularly known as the Wizard of the North.

### CHAPTER III.

#### “LANGHOLM AS IT WAS.”

IT will be readily understood that the Langholm of which I write was very different from the one which we now see. The reader must imagine a town, one half composed of whitewashed cottages, some slated but many thatched. There were no trains, no telegraph, far less a telephone; no organized police force, no local authority, no motor cars, no drainage system, no water supply, no gas. Oil lamps and tallow candles served for illumination, and were well thought of, too. The stage coach rattled through the town twice daily. The post itself was almost a novelty.

The people, too, were different. They spoke a purer Scots tongue in which had survived some quaint mediæval expressions. Our fathers said “Mononday”\* for Monday, and older people said “Forsday” for Thursday. Sunday was called “the Sabbath-the-Day,” and they spoke of handwriting as “hand-o'-w-rite,” pronouncing the “w” as a separate syllable. It was not then considered bad taste for people with an income of over thirty shillings a week, nor yet for professional men, to speak our mother tongue, even from the pulpit and the platform.

\* “And in semblable manere sal the saidz wardanes, or thair deputes assemble at Kircander, Mounowndy, the 11th day of the same moneth for Eskdale and Lyddalysdale.”—See Note ii., p. 155 of Armstrong's *History of Liddesdale, &c.*

## THE SIMPLE LIFE.

The manner of life was on a much simpler plan than ours; dress was different, and I think much more agreeable. It may sound old-fashioned and funny to say so, but in my young days clothes were actually designed to protect the wearer from the weather and give comfort and warmth.

Langholm was then a town of some 3,000 inhabitants, rather more than it has at the present time. Isolated and lonely in the midst of its beautiful hills, it was favourably placed for the nurturing of “characters.” There is something lacking now, but existing then, which made for the development of originality. We seem much more commonplace than our grandfathers were—or can it be, I wonder, that the glasses through which I look back to the past are somewhat dimmed to the defects of those “good old times?” But what strange specimens of humanity we had among us then! My feeble pen cannot possibly reproduce all the humour, all the fun, or all the pathos and tragedy of Langholm life. My readers must bring their powers of imagination to the aid of my efforts if they are to understand aright what manner of men we were some seventy years ago.

## LANGHOLM SEVENTY YEARS AGO.

The Old-town of Langholm, built on the site of the Battle of Arkinholm, which in 1455 shattered the power of the House of Douglas, grouped itself more closely then than now round the main road, and had not as yet thrown out its suburbs of Arkinholm Terrace



or Coomassie, or even Eskdail Street and Buccleuch Terrace. The site of Buccleuch Terrace was then a green field through which ran the mill-dam. About the middle of the Terrace stood a very picturesque cottage with a large tree waving right over it, and a rustic wooden bridge spanning the dam, which is channelled in the recollection of every Meikleholmer. After a detour to serve Bowman's Mill, the dam ran across Henry Street, where it was crossed by a quaint, high arched, stone bridge, known as “The Dam Brig.” It is always associated in my mind with a cow we once had, whose memory fails to re-awaken within me one single pleasurable thought. There was one quality it had, however, of which, as a boy, I sometimes boasted. It was the most athletic cow of my acquaintance, and, in those days, I was brought into an unwilling association with not a few. We lived then where the Parish Council Offices are, and on being driven home of a night, the cow scornfully disdained the bridge, but like us lads, it just “loupit the dam.” This, I may add, was the only amusement or satisfaction that cow ever afforded me!

It competed for the place of active dislike in my affections with working at the peats—but I think the peats won. Being out on the peat-hill from early morning till sunset; picnicking for one's meals, a form of recreation I have carefully avoided all my life; wheeling a heavy awkward barrow along the side of Warbla, where the Creator never meant a road to be; being caught in a heavy thunder plump and letting one's clothes be dried by the sun—these are the images still conveyed to my mind by the phrase, “working at the

peats.” Then the thirst and the hunger induced by the keen hill air blowing straight from the Solway and the sheer exhaustion afterwards ! The only amusing memory I can recall in connection with the peats was a declaration made to me one evening by Big Rob, who at that time was in my father’s employ, as he and I were plodding our weary way down the Stubholm Path. He declared he was so exhausted that he had not sufficient strength to blow his nose ! With a definite purpose in view, I related this incident to my father. Remembering now Rob’s enormous strength, I fancy I must have over-done this exhaustion business, for my father only looked steadily at me with a playful gleam in his eye but said not one word. After tea he drily remarked that “he thoct he nicht daunder doon and see how Big Rob was now !” But the suggestion I meant to convey, I regret to say, did not save me so much as one hour’s work at the peats !

The Drove Road was the town’s eastern boundary, with the kirk on its verge, and on the south the Gas Entry was its limit. The Straits were straiter then, and ran in line with the houses still standing between the Douglas Hotel and the Spotted House. Many of the houses, even in the High Street, were thatched. The last I remember was a cottage which occupied the site of the present Conservative Club. Where the Library now is there stood a row of stiff-looking, whitewashed houses, with steps up to the doors. Opposite, stood the Shoulder of Mutton Inn, which crept much closer to the roadway than the present hotel. There was, of course, no Rosevale Street, though Rosevale House was

there. When Rosevale Street was built, there was removed from the Straits a house, long occupied by old



LANGHOLM MARKET PLACE.

Blaiklaw, a lame man, who for many years herded the cows grazing on the Castle Hill.

On the site of the National Bank stood the Post Office and some other houses. The only Bank then in the

town was known as the Leith Bank. Murray House occupied the site of Mr. Milroy's and neighbouring shops. The picture given on the previous page shows very faithfully what the Market Place and Straits were like, though perhaps my artist friend has slightly improved the general appearance. The picture is very nearly a reproduction of a lithograph made in 1842 for Mr. John Renwick, the stationer. The *Dumfries and Galloway Courier* of 31st January, 1842, contains a notice of the issue of this picture. It is headed :—

“ FINE ARTS—LANGHOLM,”

and says, “The said very pleasing picture represents the Town-House and Market Place of the Capital of Eskdale, with sections of the street on either side, and in front of the principal building named, a peep is given, by anticipation, of the marble statue about to be erected to the memory of Admiral Sir Pulteney Malcolm.”

A BURNS DINNER.

Almost at the date of Mr. Renwick's publishing this picture, a notable gathering took place in Langholm to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Burns. Dunbar, the sculptor of Sir Pulteney's statue, took an active share in organizing the banquet over which presided Mr. William Aitchison of Linhope, a platform speaker of the front rank at that time. I well remember this dinner, owing to the excitement created in the town by the expectation of seeing and hearing Mr. Robert Burns of London, eldest son of the poet, who replied to the toast of his distinguished father. Admiral Sir Charles Malcolm was also present and spoke.

THE JAIL.

Not having very many architectural features in the town, we Langholm folk felt quite proud of our “Town-House”—a name, by the way, given to it only on paper. We called it the Jail, and after the removal of the Cross, when Sir Pulteney’s statue was erected, its steps provided, as they still do, a favourite place for open-air speakers, and a meeting place for the “drouthy neebors” of the town, as well as a safe vantage-ground for that strange class of men who only seemed to “look on” at the working life of the place. We often boasted of our spire-topped Jail, and laughed at a neighbouring village where, it was jocularly said in Langholm, they kept their prisoners in by a big thorn branch laid across the doorway. It was told that one day a Langholm man had offended the majesty of the law in this village and had been locked up. He kept demanding to be released, using the curious threat that if “they didna let him oot he wud gan hame and tell the Langholm folk what kind o’ jail they had,” and added that, “if they were not quick in releasing him, he would carry their jail on his back over the hill and show it to the people of Langholm.” So it would appear that the local rivalry, of which I have written, existed even in the matter of prisons.

On the right of the picture can be seen the Shoulder of Mutton Inn and the King’s Arms Hotel, on the site of which the Eskdale Temperance Hotel has since been built. On the opposite side of the Market Place stood, what we called, “The Three-Storey House,” it being the only one in Langholm of that height. Tradition says

that here was built one of the houses erected under the Nithsdale Contract of 1628.\* I have never been able to verify this statement, though I consider it not unlikely. Projecting into the square and in the picture, hiding this house, whose chimney only can be seen, is the house so long occupied by the late Archibald Glendinning, ironmonger.

#### BAULDY'S STEPS.

The steps shown in the illustration were called “Bauldy's Steps,” so named probably from the house being the residence of Archbald Little, brother of Bailie Little, who for a generation was Langholm's leading citizen. The connection of the Littles with this house seems to strengthen the tradition I have just mentioned, for, it will be remembered, they came into the ownership of some of the Ten-Merk Lands of Langholm, which entailed an obligation to build some such house in the High Street of Langholm.

I remember an old man, whose name has escaped my memory, making Bauldy's Steps his daily resort. He was very much crippled with rheumatism, and any one going past might hear him, when his pains gave an extra twinge, addressing his limbs in this strain:—  
“Now ye're beginning yer capers again. Ye'd better be carefu' or ye'll maybe get a turn as far as Whita yett.”

#### MUNGO PARK.

The New-town was mostly built of one-storey cot-

\* See *Langholm As It Was*, p. 874.

tages. All these are down now, excepting one or two on Esk side and one side of Manse Street, now Caroline Street, which is represented on the print overleaf. In the second house from the left lived a sister of Dr. Laidlaw, whom I have mentioned as the friend of Mungo Park—that famous son of Yarrow. When Park returned to this country in 1799, he came to Langholm to visit the Laidlaw family, who entertained him in this house. I have heard my father relate how, in expectation of this event, the Laidlaws put a new grate into their room, and it was the first “Kinnaird” grate to be set up in Langholm, and was no doubt cast at the famous Carron works. Long years afterwards, soon after our marriage, my wife and I came to live in this house, and here all our children were born. The fact of Mungo Park having been a guest therein always, in my estimation, gave the house a certain distinction.

These houses were erected when the Meikleholm farm was broken up for building sites by “Good Duke Henry.” I have heard Half-a-Croon Andra say that most of the stones used in building them were obtained from the Cairn which stood down the loaning between Stubholm and Murtholm.

#### THE COTTAGES.

These cottages consisted either of a “but and a ben” or of one apartment and a garret. It seems strange at this date to think of the families who were reared in them,—reared, not as slum children, weak and degenerate, but respectably and in robust health. Of course there were then no bye-laws requiring so much





cubic space per head, nor any of the other modern fads. Very little attention was given to ventilation; indeed, very few windows could be opened, and most of them which could were not. All the houses were provided with outside shutters which were fastened from the inside by a bolt. This arrangement effectually kept out the morning air until the household was astir. The shutters afforded Tom Cairns, of whom I shall tell later, an excellent blackboard on which to chalk his love messages to "Mary," or his quotations from the *Spectator*. When they were closed the cosiness of the inside of the cottages was increased, but the effect in intensifying the darkness outside was appalling. At that time the window duty was in force. A house with eight windows became liable to a tax of 15 6. The cottages, having less than eight windows, many of them only two and a skylight, were exempt.

In the "but and ben" type of cottage the "ben" end served as a bedroom, and the "but" end or kitchen was often utilized as a weaving shop. This arrangement fell into disuse when the prosperity of the woollen mills created a demand for better housing accommodation. The word "sanitary" was hardly in use. The scope of the sanitary precautions was limited in many houses to whitewashing the walls, inside and out, once a year, about the Summer Fair. The present craze for sanitation would then have been looked upon by old folks as contrary to the laws of nature and a "tempting of Providence,"—a phrase we often used. Nor had we then received the revelation that it is the correct thing for people in enfeebled health to sleep in a draught. Our

great concern at such times was to escape them. The floor was mostly of earth, though in later years boards or flags were laid down. Under the bed there was often dug a fairly deep pit in which the potatoes were stored. In re-building these houses I have come across many such relics of the past. Under the fire there was another pit for the ashes, with a grating covering it. This effectually prevented any wastage of cinders, and I have often thought it could with advantage be retained in our modern houses. The pit was called “the ās-pit,” and our domestic economy included an “ās-bucket” for removing the ashes, or for the handling of peats or coals. These articles have long since disappeared from use.

#### COSINESS.

Though small and inconvenient the cottages were cosy, and in some of the severe winters which I can recall in my early days, there was considerable comfort. Men who were reared in them went to fight our country's battles by sea and land, and not a few rose to eminence. We must also remember that our forefathers had a marvellous disregard of personal comfort, which perhaps accounts both for their success as colonists and missionaries, and also for their contentment at home with a very rough-and-tumble existence.

There was one great advantage arising from the size and style of the houses. The necessity for spring-cleaning, that “abomination of desolation,” as auld Lencie Armstrong called it, scarcely existed. Lencie lived to see the modern mania, which he never ceased to deplore, and some of his most characteristic sayings were con-

cerning it. Being deeply interested in prophecy he interpreted spring-cleaning as a sign of the end,—indeed, he said, it seemed to him that the only meaning he could attach to it was that it was the pouring out of the Seventh Vial, so darkly foreshadowed in the Book of Revelation !

#### PEAT FIRES AS CLOCKS.

Inside the houses candles were used for illumination, but sometimes even they were thought extravagant, and unless anything special, such as reading or writing, was being done, the candles were put out, and the blaze of the peat fire was sufficient to allow the gude-man to smoke and the gude-wife to knit. On occasion the peat fires also served as clocks. As the peats burned very evenly the time could be calculated with fair accuracy by the replenishing that was required. People spoke of “sitting” so many peat fires.

Outside, in the busy town, the illuminating was done by oil lamps. They were covered by a lid which was lifted out when the lamps had to be cleaned, trimmed, or replenished. Across the top of the lamp there was a wire drawn, and from it was suspended a tin tray for the oil. In the oil two wicks were immersed. The lamps were allowed to burn until they exhausted the oil or the wick, and they were often found burning at eight o'clock in the morning. Perhaps this arrangement was a benevolent one, born of the necessities of the times, for at that date there was no ten o'clock rule for the closing of public houses, and some means of guiding the revellers home was really a public necessity. The

lamps were cleaned and replenished with fresh oil every day. The lamp-lighter in my youth was John Boyd, one of our local worthies, to whom I shall again refer. To light the lamps he carried a flaming torch which was an unfailing source of interest to us boys. The light given out was not what one could describe as pure in quality, but for this defect it made up in quantity. There was an abundance of lamps in various parts of the town. I remember no fewer than seven in the Front Street, now called Charles Street (New).

Candle making was quite an active trade in Langholm, and Jamie Hope, in the Drove Road, did a large business both in the home and export trade, and there was one Richardson, also a candle seller, in the High Street. Thrifty house-wives who wished to make their own candles had to do so in the night time, with the windows well darkened, for in those "good old days," on candles as on most other things, both luxuries and necessities, there was a heavy duty, and strange as it seems to us, the smuggler of candles was punished quite as severely as the smuggler of spirits. It may be taken for granted, therefore, that the two local officers of excise enjoyed no sinecure. Lencie Armstrong used to say that, next to spring cleaning, candle making was, in a domestic sense, the most abominable craze that a house-wife could cultivate. It was !

Public buildings such as the kirks were lighted partly by oil and partly by candles. The pulpit had an oil lamp as a general rule, but everything on a lower level than the precentor's desk, had to be content with tallow candles. The vivid description given by Mr. J. M.

Barrie of the snuffing of the candles in the Auld Licht Kirk of Thrums, could have been applied to Langholm also, where that scene was re-enacted every Sunday night. It was nobody's special duty to snuff the candles in the body of the kirk. Any active and intelligent man might venture on the task, and his efforts, it is needless to say, excited the liveliest interest among the congregation generally, and among the juvenile section particularly. The effort did not always meet with immediate success, and when an awkward, feckless man burned his fingers, an incident of frequent occurrence, we boys felt that Langholm had its compensations, though his wife and family felt humiliated to the very dust.

#### GAS.

The introduction of gas was a notable event, and I well remember the memorable night when it was first turned on. Of course the luxury was to be found only in the houses of the elect. Ordinary folks regarded gas much as they then regarded the franchise—something they would have liked, perhaps indeed deserved, but which they simply could not get. Langholm was astir—full of eagerness, waiting for the eventful hour. Until it came we spent the time perambulating the streets—criticising the burners, which showed a wonderful variety, for we had not only the commonplace single jet, but such whimsical varieties as "batwings," "fishtails," &c. At that time the Rev. John Dobie resided at Greenbank, and with characteristic consideration he arranged that the Manse blinds should be left up so that the large

concourse of people on the roadway might see the splendid illumination. When the gas was at length turned on, and the people saw the interior of the room—the furniture and even the pictures—there was a great outburst of cheering to hail the reaching of another milestone on the road of progress. But the rejoicing was not unanimous. Some of the old folks doubted. They feared that somewhere in the innovation Auld Nick might be secretly lurking. They were extremely suspicious of what Lencie Armstrong called “new kicks,” and doubted whether any good could come of such novelties.

To the weavers of the town the directors of the Gas Company made a special concession. They were allowed to have the gas for their weaving shops at so much a week, but certain restrictions as to burners were imposed. The favour, however, was withdrawn when it was discovered that some of the weavers were in the habit of taking the burners out altogether and then singeing sheep heads at the flame, and meters were at once introduced. It was some years later, in 1851, before the gas was adopted in the new Established Kirk.

#### MATCHES AND SPUNKS.

Closely allied to the introduction of gas was that of lucifer matches, and it is no exaggeration to say that they, too, were hailed as among the wonders of the age. The first box that I saw was on exhibition in the window of Mr. Fenwick, the stationer. In each box there was a piece of folded sand-paper, and, to get the light, the

match had to be drawn sharply through this. Up to this time the tinder box was in daily use. This was a round tin box about four inches in diameter by two deep, and a kind of candle-stick fixed on the lid. Workmen often carried these boxes with them to their work. The tinder was a partially burnt rag. There were also the flint and steel, or the “frixil” as it was called, and by means of these the spark was produced which ignited the tinder, —which having been done—well, there you were! It was a picturesque method, but in actual practice was not quite so simple as it looked, and in the hands of an awkward man, or one agitated, say, by sudden illness in the house, it was not exactly an expeditious way of obtaining a light. But it was all we had, and we saw little fault in it. Then came spunks, which were splints of dried wood some four or five inches long, sharpened at both ends and tipped with sulphur.

Such, then, were a few of “the resources of civilization” when I was a youth so many years ago. The reference to matches seems to suggest tobacco, and it is, perhaps, worthy of mention, that there was then in Langholm a tobacco manufacturer. I believe his premises were somewhere in Wapping Lane.

#### FURNITURE.

Whilst there was in Langholm no abject or degrading poverty, there was what I might call “poorness.” The whole style of living was on a scale which now-a-days would be considered extremely frugal. The furniture, as might be expected, was neither costly or elaborate. Chippendale would have been out of place; it was

strength and durability that were needed. The beds in common use were called “box-beds.” The ends and backs were of wood, and there was also a wooden canopy, which, as all the cottage ceilings were low, was no great height from the bolster. When the beds had received their annual replenishment of new, clean, “cauff,”\* a chair was frequently required to enable one to mount into them. On the top of the canopy was disposed a considerable portion of the family goods—boots, handboxes with the gude-wife’s Sunday bonnet and the gude-man’s best “tile,” and not infrequently such things as garden tools. Beneath the beds were stowed away what one might call auxiliary beds, but which were then known as “hurley-beds.” When retiring time came these were hauled out and the younger bairns put into them, the older ones having been packed away into the loft, which not seldom had all the appearance of a barracks. Frightfully cold it often was up there near the slates. If a slate happened to be off we had the advantage of being able to watch the stars, but I do not remember that this made us like the cold any better! Often during my apprenticeship, when my father had contracts in the country, and we had to “put-up” in cot-houses, we had a vivid experience of this accommodation, which, however, we were often glad to get. Not infrequently on such occasions we were offered the farm hay loft! My father was a man always very careful of his health, one of his most active aversions being a damp bed. I have known him when, by some of his tests, he detected dampness, wrap him-

\* Chaff.



self in his plaid, and sit up the whole night. When he had only a suspicion that the bed was damp he took other steps. One occasion I remember when several of us occupied the loft. Just when we were nearly asleep the alarm was raised that he suspected dampness, and we were all awakened to deal with the situation. His precaution was to wrap himself up in newspapers, of which the loft contained a large quantity. We thought that this would let us get to sleep in peace and quiet, but the rattle every time he stirred, and he stirred often, gave us all one of the most restless nights we ever spent.

At the risk of digressing I am tempted to linger here over some of my father's little peculiarities. He was a man of great force of character and intelligence, of progressive ideas, of much originality, and was perhaps the best teller of a story in Langholm. But viewed from the distance of seventy odd years, some of his ways strike me now as singular and amusing. He had a keen appreciation of physical comfort, which on some of those country expeditions excited the admiration and envy of us apprentices. On one such occasion, when we were far up in Eskdalemuir, my fellow apprentice, Davie Elliot, and I felt that there had been more than the usual inequality in arranging the sleeping accommodation, and I may here say that it was not always easy to arrange matters when the space was limited, because crowded though we might be my father would have no one to share his bed. One of my brothers, who had an attractive gift of grouping and shading the comic elements of a situation, was fond of telling how on one

occasion circumstances arose which compelled him to share a bed with my father. It was an experiment never repeated. His account of it was that next morning at breakfast time my father had a woe-begone appearance, and in answer to anxious enquiries said he had had a very bad night. Pressed to explain more fully he said, with reference to my brother, that "maybe they wadna believe't, but through the nicht he actually felt him touch him!"

During a saunter along the hillside Davie and I resolved to be revenged about the beds. My father and his brother occupied the room just under the loft, and in compliment to his extreme sensitiveness and horror of being disturbed in his sleep, we caught one or two of the cocks and hens strolling around the cot-house, and during the foresupper smuggled them into the loft, where they soon went to roost. It was about three o'clock in the morning when the fun began. First the birds strutted awhile about the loft, and then the crowing commenced, one answering the other in energetic fashion. Speedily the whole household was aroused, but Davie and I "the young rascals," as they all termed us, slept soundly through the din. Naturally we did not escape punishment. My father's was a severe and high-toned lecture on the heinousness of interfering with other people's comfort, which we received in meekness and repentance, but our good landlady took the extreme step of expelling us from her hospitable home. We tried every way to appease her, but when tea-time came we had made no progress at all. We were in a dilemma because no other accommodation could be had. By supper time

the situation had become desperate, and even my father so far forgot his wrath as to appeal on our behalf. But the woman would not budge—an obstinate auld body she was! At last an inspiration came to me. She had a curious delight in having an abundance of fire-wood in the house. It generally filled her oven and overflowed on to the hearth and even behind the fire. One could not please her more than by “chipping her a wheen sticks,” as she called it, even though her store places were full to overflowing. So I explained my idea to Davie :

“Now Davie,” I said, “I think it can be dune.”

“How?” he enquired doubtfully.

“Kindlers!” I replied.

Davie doubted the efficacy of my scheme but I was confident of success, so together we pulled down a considerable section of a paling near by and carried the thing bodily down to the cottage, regardless of a future row about the damage to the fence. As we entered, the family were gathered round the hearth in the dim firelight, and when the gude-wife saw the palings being borne into the room she first smiled doubtfully and then simply clapped her hands in delight—and Davie and I were saved.

My father was always devising means of saving himself trouble, but often we lads did not show a fitting gratitude. In the early years of my apprenticeship it was generally necessary to “call” me in the morning, for we had to be at work by six o’clock, and sometimes a fair amount of perseverance in the good work was required. To save perambulating the passage and stairs

my father rigged up, at the head of my bed, a bell which he could ring by a rope near to his own bed. The first morning of the experiment the bell kept ringing long after I was dressed and ready for work, so I took out my pocket knife, cut the rope, and laid the bell down at the side of my bed. As I went out I gave a look into my father's room and found him pulling away at the rope with evident satisfaction.

"Is't working all right?" he asked pleasantly.

"Its lying on the flure yonder," I replied, beating a retreat, and just hearing faintly his protestations. I felt a little compunction at the deed when I saw the innocent delight the contrivance gave him.

The difficulty in obtaining lodgings in country places became so acute that my father, who showed quite a genius in devising means to make life easier, devised a portable cottage, which we carried with us to those country jobs. Here we formed a kind of "masonic" community, but one devoid of all ceremonies, in which I acted as cook and housekeeper. I found housekeeping quite a simple matter. Of course we did not take any silver with us, nor much cutlery, and we left all the household ornaments at home! Our bill of fare was necessarily plain and substantial, and the expenses, as near as I can remember now, averaged about three and sixpence a head. I have often explained to my wife and daughters the broad lines upon which I managed this establishment, and recommended the adoption of my methods both on the grounds of simplicity and economy, but my suggestions I regret to say, have been received only with ridicule and contempt.

Perhaps in hay time, after a heavy day's work in the broiling sun, we would all be astounded to hear my father suggest, that as he feared a change in the weather, perhaps it would be safer to “kyle” the hay than to leave it spread out, or in “foot-cocks.” We would receive instructions to wait whilst he went to a certain part of the field where he reckoned he could better judge the prospects of a change. If he held up his “nibbie” we had to “kyle,” if he did not we might go home to our tea. So we waited anxiously, but somehow or other it always seemed to us that the “nibbie” had it, and we then had the pleasure of seeing my father go comfortably home to tea whilst we began to “kyle” the entire field. We indulged in some grim humour over the matter!

I need hardly say that these “pernickity” ways did not always meet with the approval of us boys, to whom no doubt they proved an excellent discipline. They generally meant more work for us, but on one occasion at any rate we had our revenge. My father had spent a great deal of time in fixing up a shower bath in the house, and had sunk a well, from which we could pump a copious supply of very cold water into the back kitchen. Underneath this last we had a cellar and milk house—a place which struck a chill into one even in the summer time. Here my father erected his shower bath. His idea was to fill a tank in the back kitchen with this ice-cold water, and then at his signal we had to release it gradually whilst he stood under the arrangement in the cellar. I was selected to assist him in carrying out the scheme, and what he impressed most carefully upon me

was that I was not to pull out the plug of the cistern quickly, but to do it gradually, so that he could get accustomed to the shock of the cold water. I said I quite understood the idea, and taking my place at the cistern awaited the signal. My father's preparations for anything were generally extensive, and I got wearied of the delay. At length the signal came, and I had scarcely heard it when out came the plug bodily and . . . They heard the yell in the next house, and I deemed it advisable not to appear at the next meal.

But I have wandered far away from the “hurley-beds!”

These were not peculiar to Langholm. I have read somewhere that 100 years ago in the Masters' houses of an old English University they were in regular use, but probably there the “hurleys” were known by a Latin name! The box-beds were somewhat costly, and the women-folk of the house displayed no little pride in them. They were carefully screened from light and air, sometimes by shutters, but generally by cotton curtains, which at night were closely drawn. A dresser and corner cupboard were also deemed indispensable, and when these were stocked with good Staffordshire ware, with, perhaps, the wedding china well to the front, quite a fine show was made. The coarser ware, the “gleyed” plates and the cups, which leaned like the Tower of Pisa, bought from Pete Johnstone, or, perhaps, from Jean Kerrick or Ann Donkin on their daily rounds, were relegated to the wall-press. A common mantel-piece ornament was a pair of china dogs—one at each end—a form of art to which I always had a great aversion. There were no carpets or hearthrugs. I

recall that when a family got a carpet they were considered to be either very extravagant or to be “gey weel off.” In place of them the cleanly house-wife would substitute designs in chalk or soft sandstone on her hearth-stone and kitchen floor. If the kitchen was boarded instead of flagged it was considered quite the correct style to have the floor well sanded. No one ever thought that the continual crunching was uncomfortable or unpleasant.

#### COOKING.

The cooking utensils were few and simple, but every family had at least a pot for porridge, another for potatoes, and a girdle for the making of oatmeal cakes, and occasionally, such delicacies as apple bannocks. The oatmeal cakes formed a considerable portion of our food, and were varied by barley or pease bread, both of which are now off the menu. People to-day would not eat pease bread, especially with three or four days age upon it. But for a man, say a herd or a stonedyker who was going to be out in the hill air all day, a meal of pease bannock, with a bit hard Dutch cheese as “kitchen,” was well calculated to keep his digestive organs active for ten or twelve hours at a stretch. It strikes me now that we did not give very much attention to eating, as a pleasure or a pastime. It was considered an advisable thing to eat as much as possible at a meal to save any further necessity for some hours to come. My father used to tell how one day as he was passing an old coaching inn in Carlisle there came out a Scots drover who had just had a good square meal. As my father passed,

the drover wiped his mouth and remarked, “That’ll set me weel owre Stirling Brig!” Our food was not dainty, but it was wholesome, and there was reared on it a race of men and women who were strong both mentally and physically. My readers may think it only an old man’s lament, but I cannot help deploring the modern tendency to depart from those simple rules of life. A Scots race brought up on porridge and the like were, in my opinion, superior in every way to their descendants, pampered by every toothsome delicacy their whimsical appetites demand.

Our table appointments were correspondingly simple. The spoons were of horn, and the forks were two pronged with horn handles. When the good old horn spoons gave place to the glittering electro-plated goods, the change was deplored by older folk, many of whom declined to use the newer and more fashionable article. At a public dinner one night a farmer out of Wauchope managed to create quite a disturbance about the spoons. He had as usual made a gulp at his broth—it was called *soup* on the card—and blamed the spoon for the scalding of his mouth. Instead of just “slisking” in private as the others did, he loudly demanded, “Hey lassie, bring me a horn spune.” The lassie explained that they had not one in the house, when he compromised the matter by insisting that he must, at any rate, “hev a bowl o’ cauld water to cool his metal ane in.” Everybody laughed, of course, at the incident, but if truth must be told the farmer only voiced a general sentiment. These dinners, by the way, were fairly frequent among us. The farmers had dinners, so had the curlers, when the old-



time fare of “beef and greens” was served. On St. John’s night we Freemasons generally had a very successful dinner, and the Friendly Societies followed suit as occasion offered. These functions called forth some capital stories, not a few of them bearing directly on the awkwardness of this one or that one at the table. When Davie Deve seized a piece of shortbread, and ate it to the broth, instead of reserving it, as was intended, to accompany the “nip” of whisky served at the end of the dinner, everyone recognised the incongruity of the thing. It became a proverb in Langholm speech, and afterwards “shortbread and broth” were always considered the worst assorted meal one’s fancy could imagine. Despite the priming by the women-folk, it was not always easy to remember just what to do with all the cutlery, when, probably, the diner had been accustomed to nothing more elaborate than a two-pronged fork, and often enough not even that. In his own home auld Lancie Armstrong strongly resisted all these innovations, declaring that he for one “wad never attempt to sup broo wi’ a fork!” It is related that at one of the dinners the waiter offered Lancie some gooseberry jelly to eat with his roast mutton. “No, no, my man,” he answered loftily, “A’ve never accustomed mysel’ to eat jam wi’ butcher-meat.” Another invention, concerning which I have heard him wax satirical, was the use of the tooth-brush, which he regarded as most effeminate. Often, in my hearing, he congratulated himself that “there had never been a brush inside his mooth!” And here I may say that Lancie’s description of the waiter at one of these public dinners as “a muckle

fallow wi' a dickie doon to his breek-band heid,” was generally admitted to be one of his happiest efforts.

There was usually some mild excitement about our attire for these great occasions. The wardrobes of most of the diners being circumscribed, borrowing was often resorted to, for it was quite understood in the town that dress-shirts were luxuries. A relative of mine happened to drop into Johnie Weave's house just as he was girning on at the looking glass trying to fasten the neck button. My relative was listening to his wife, Tibbie's talk, but noticed that she kept glancing anxiously over to see how the contest was progressing. “Dear me, Johnie,” she said at length, “dinna tug on like that, get another shirt.” Johnie instantly wheeled round, his eyes blazing—“H'way now,” he retorted, in his inimitable manner, “dinna tr-try to mak oot tae Mistress —— that a've mair than yin!”

The speeches, too, were often very amusing. At one dinner, which I remember, the health of auld Wullie Davidson was proposed—why, no one clearly understood, unless it was that there was still half an hour to fill up. Wullie, who was a Cumberland man, and who by reason of his constant use of the expression “by goom,” was described by an innocent old lady of my acquaintance as “an auld sweerin' scoondrel,” rather bluntly declined to respond, and the “pleasing duty” was forced upon his son Jock, to whom words did not come very readily. Jock thanked them, however, and said, “he had kent his faither for mony an 'eer, in fact, he nicht say he was vera weel acquaint wi'm, and he aye thocht he was a decent eneuch body.”

I need hardly say that every house-wife baked her own bread. It was only in cases of emergency that the baker's shop was resorted to. At weddings and funerals there had to be fancy bread, and at the New Year the household “bun” was helped out by shortbread from the shop, but at ordinary times we lived on the products of the girdle. I remember once when baker's bread was coming more into use, a considerable increase in price had been made, whereupon the bellman—Bonnie Willie it was, with his shepherd's plaid flung negligently about his tall, upright figure—went round the town giving “Notice,” to the house-wives to “use your girdles!” Willie was paid sixpence for one of these perambulations, and some discussion arose as to who paid him for this public service.

#### POTATO DISEASE.

Not infrequently in my younger days there was great scarcity of food. An event which stamped itself on the memory of everybody living in Langholm in the early Forties was the outbreak of the potato disease. Up to that time, no such occurrence had been known in Scotland, and I can at this moment vividly recall the consternation it caused. I remember seeing my father come in from his field on Warbla side with some of the diseased potatoes in his hands, and the anxious consultation which ensued. At that time meal was very dear, and working people lived, to a considerable extent, on potatoes. “Potato suppers” were regarded as something special, and neighbours were often asked in to share the first fruits—great “frush” potatoes.

with plenty of butter and milk ! The danger from the disease was, therefore, a very serious prospect. There had been several bad harvests, and imported flour was made almost impossible of purchase with a duty on it of forty-two shillings a quarter. Days of fasting and of humiliation and prayer were regular events, and the petition that we might be preserved from “cleanness of teeth” was not simply a devotional expression. A wet summer or back-end produced a feeling of depression, to which, happily, we are now strangers ; so when this failure of the potato crop came dismay and lamentation possessed the land. It was, indeed, a dreadful time in Langholm. It was at a season like this, that the minister of an adjacent parish went to visit a widow-woman and her children, who were suffering acutely from the scarcity of necessary food. He listened to her piteous tale, and tried to encourage her in her gallant struggle by seriously reminding her that the nettles would soon be here now, when she could make nettle broth for her hungry family ! It is not recorded how the widow received the comfort, but one can imagine how consoling the thought would be to the hungry bairns crying for bread ! Broth made from the fresh young nettles was very palatable, and I believe nutritious, but it went out of fashion long ago. We prefer tomato soup now—one of the “wairshest” mixtures I ever tasted.

#### MEAL RIOTS.

The potato famine suggests the Meal Riots, of which I often heard my grandfather speak. He was a meal

dealer in Charles Street (New), with a shop just a little nearer the Bridge than the present Co-operative Stores. The riot occurred one Saturday night, when it was believed there was not a stone of meal for sale in Langholm. My grandfather was at Hawick bringing a load, and, on this becoming known, the people went up as far as Arkin to meet him, imploring him to let them have a stone, half-a-stone, any quantity which could be turned into food for the women and bairns, who were being driven to desperation by hunger. He managed to get home with his load, and gave orders that no meal was to go out of the house until it was first paid for in cash, for unless he got the money he could not go to Hawick for more. The shop was besieged by a threatening crowd, and constables had to be got to prevent the meal from being forcibly seized. My grandmother, however, a woman of deep sympathies and of great charity, could not resist the entreaties of the anxious pale-faced women, who came pleading that their hungry bairns were starving. She never moved from the shop until every ounce of meal had been given out. When she made up the cash there was only one-half of what there should have been. However, at this moment, in came a neighbour, William Little, of the Post Office,\* who generously laid down the balance of money required to get another load of meal on the Monday. The event created much excitement in the town, and during the service in the parish kirk next morning the minister referred to it, and expressing the

\* William Little was grandfather of the late Mr. J. C. Little, at one time of Carlesgill, and Calfield, and of Burnfoot, Ewes.

hope that Langholm might never again witness such a scene. Nor has it. It was soon after the scarcity I have mentioned as occurring in the early Forties, that a change in the fiscal policy of the country made the importation of foreign flour possible. I have no wish to enter here on any debatable question of modern politics, but I lived through those years of scarcity, and know from actual experience that the coming in of American flour saved Langholm from a recurrence of such pitiable scenes, and enabled even poor folk to regard without undue alarm a failure of the crops.

#### BARLEY-MEAL PORRIDGE.

In connection with the question of food I remember an incident occurring, which was humorous rather than pathetic. At that time fighting was very common, as I shall show later, and a fight had taken place on Moodlawpoint Square, immediately after a very poor harvest, when, owing to a scarcity of oats, barley-meal was being used largely. One of the combatants had given his opponent, against whom, of course, he had no malice, considerable punishment. But evidently he himself had been disappointed with his display on this occasion, for as he walked away amidst the cheers of his admirers, he declared that his partial failure was attributable to the diet. “Boys,” he said, “them barley-meal porridge is no the thing; A’ should hae lickit that man far suner!”

#### DRESS.

At the risk of making this chapter too long I must say something about the dress of the period, for in

almost no particular has there been a greater change. Both in style and quality the change is shown. The chief object sought for, especially in men's clothes, was durability. We cared little for “fashions”—we spoke of people being “auld-fashioned,” but rarely applied the term to dress.

Most men had, in addition to their ordinary clothes, a black suit, which did service at weddings and funerals, and perhaps at christenings and the summer Sacrament. These suits were expected practically to last a man's lifetime, and along with the tall hat were sometimes handed down from father to son. I remember once seeing Tom Cairns in a suit which older people remembered to have been his father's 30 years before. Not only was Tom eccentric, but his mother was scarcely less so. At the instance of the local authorities she was induced one spring to have a “cleaning,” and Tom's suit turned up in the confusion, and on its reappearance called forth quite a fund of reminiscence. Little attention was paid to style. The clothes were made “lucky,” and if the wearer developed either in height or width, -well, the clothes fitted just the same. Old Tommy Wilson, the tailor, refused to be hampered even by such considerations as measurements. “Juist walk across the flure, my man,” he would say to a customer, and then over his glasses he would measure him with the eye of an artist,—“Aye, that'll do ; ye're about Johnnie Thomson's clip A' think.” That was all. There was no chalking, no pinning, no padding—the clothes were brought home over Tommy's arm on the Saturday night, and he received from seven-and-six to half-a-sovereign for the job.

Sometimes, even in Langholm, taste in dress ran to extremes. When Jockie Telfer's eldest boy chose the calling of an ostler as his undoubted sphere in life, there was simply no pleasing him in the style of his trousers. No tailor in Langholm could make them quite tight enough. At last he became desperate, and after trying to make auld Johnie Dickie understand how tight the pair of new nether garments he was ordering must be if they were to please him, he had to fall back on this position: "Now Johnie," he said in further explanation, "A' want ye to understan' that if they gan on—they're useless!"

And yet the dress in my young days was by no means common-place. My readers will remember that I am writing of the period when Benjamin Disraeli was swaggering along Regent Street in green velvet trousers, and up in quiet little Langholm there were in vogue certain picturesque styles which men of to-day would regard with timidity. It was quite a common sight to see masons working on a scaffold clad in bottle-green dress coats, light trousers, cravats, and high hats. The last were different in make from the glossy "tile" of the modern youth. They were called "stuff hats," and the nap was perhaps an inch long. When the wind blew against the hat it gave it a curious ruffled appearance, something like what trees wear on a blowy day in autumn. I can even now recall the sight presented by one of these hats. By some process of shrinkage it had "cruppen doon," bit by bit, until it resembled nothing so much as a concertina, but it did not on that account occur to the owner that its day and generation were past. With younger men these old-world fashions gave



place to something more like those of the present day, but even a youth who would never have dreamt of appearing at his work in a swallow-tail coat, brass buttons, and high hat, affected costumes that strike us now as just a little bit loud. I can see a young man of my acquaintance whose Sunday dress consisted of the following:—A bottle-green coat, cut away at the tails and adorned with massive brass buttons; a waistcoat of bright Stewart tartan; nankeen trousers and Wellington boots. These Wellingtons were greatly worn by smart young men. They reached nearly to the knee, and their price was 20/- a pair. In the wonderful procession of fashion they were followed by Bluchers—the names indicate that the memories of Waterloo were still fresh in the public mind. The waistcoats were of gaudy colour and the make-up was striking. It was a popular fancy to have them thickly braided, and the designs showed an ingenuity in the art of tailoring which simply bewildered tailors of the old cut, like Tommy Wilson and Johnie Dickie.

I have mentioned that clothes were often handed down from father to son. Occasionally they were held in common. I remember when Jamie Cundy came into my employ as a labourer he appeared literally in rags. But next morning, to my astonishment, he wore a very decent looking Cheviot suit. Of course I said nothing about it; but when on the following day he was again in his old “duds” I made enquiry.

“Hullo, Jamie, where’s the Cheviot this morning?”

“Eh, man,” he answered regretfully, “Davie was up first this morning!”

Our footwear was in keeping with our dress. Clogs were the correct thing on week days. On Sundays we wore boots, and on looking back what occurs to me now about them is that mine always seemed to nip, and that everybody's Sunday boots squeaked. Even people who sat far back in the “loft” of the kirk knew by his special squeak that it was Red Willie who was walking down the aisle. Willie tried to minimise the noise by “skluffing” his feet on the boards, but the device only attracted to him a greater attention.

When the boots had finished their Sunday career we got clog soles put on to them, a custom which gave rise to auld Wat Armstrong's memorable definition of the expression, “the height of pride.” He said it was the wearing of a gold ring and a pair of clogs—and we all knew that in saying this Wat had in his mind a certain elder of the kirk.

These, then, were some of the fashions in Langholm, but it should be remembered that, being a town, it was often influenced by the very latest styles.

#### PLAIDS.

In the country places the chief article of a man's dress was his plaid. Before the era of overcoats all men wore plaids. Each man had two—one for Sundays and one for week days. If anyone had appeared in the kirk wearing his every-day plaid there would have been great sympathy expressed at such an evidence of poverty. In the kirk on a Sunday morning plaids were everywhere in evidence. The older men were accustomed to muffle themselves up in them when the sermon began, leaving

just sufficient room for the wearers to glance out to detect whether the minister was reading his sermon. Whether the plaid as an article of dress was artistic I am not qualified to offer an opinion, but I can say from personal experience that it was thoroughly comfortable. It was convenient, too, for at either side were large pockets—the plaid nooks—into which quite a big store of purchases could be packed.

It must not be thought, however, that there was no elegance in Langholm 70 years ago. I remember a dapper little man, a connection by marriage of my own family, who was always dressed in the very latest fashion. He practically led the way in Langholm in the matter of clothes, and so up-to-date was he that he became known as “Little Fashionables.” He occupied a responsible position in the office of a Writer—a queer, crochetty, feverish kind of body. One day “Fashionables” was lost. His master wanted him urgently. All the premises were searched but nowhere could he be found. Even the Crown Inn parlour failed to locate him, and so very extraordinary did this last appear to the Writer that he began to fear something dreadful had befallen his little clerk. He was going from room to room fretfully wringing his hands when an inspiration came to him: “Desht, boys!”—a characteristic phrase of his—“Desht, boys!” he exclaimed, “look in the wafer box; he’s maybe fa’en in!”

Concerning the dress of the women of that day I cannot profess myself competent to speak. But I remember this: that in the home, married women wore caps, and outside they wore bonnets and Paisley shawls, and their

gowns did not trail on the ground. Old women wore white “mutches,” and even in these there were “fashions.” An old woman was often judged by her “mutch.”

#### FORTUNES.

Wages were then very low and there was much straitness, relieved often by money sent by sons who had left their native town and gone out into the world. I can recall many instances of this. Sometimes, if truth must be told, the money did little good. I remember a family of sons, one of whom emigrated to America and for a time sent no word home. Then came a letter to the effect that he saw a good chance of making money, and he suggested that his brothers should send him all their savings to invest in this concern. All declined save one who sent him something like £30. Years passed, but no return of the money was made. One day, however, a letter came from a firm of lawyers in America to the one who had sent the money, intimating that his brother had died, and because of the confidence he had shown in sending the money he had left him his entire fortune of £30,000. The possession of so large a sum, however, proved too great a temptation, and, sad to say, it soon brought the owner to the dust.

Another case, this one of an amusing nature, comes to my recollection. A family in Langholm, noted for their eccentricity, received a considerable sum as a legacy. The man was a weaver, and therefore of a convivial turn, and his sudden affluence seemed to develop all his natural tendency to generosity. He parted with the money

right and left. One day whilst in Canonby he called at the Cross Keys Inn, and for some slight service done by the maid he slipped a sovereign into her hand in mistake for a shilling. She at once drew his attention to it, but pride prevented him from taking back the gold. Loftily waving the girl away he said, “No mistake, no mistake, I never give less!” However, his fondness for convivial society soon dissipated his modest fortune. One candid friend upbraided him for this improvidence, saying that if he had gone on to Langholm Bridge and pitched sovereigns into the Dog Hole in the Esk he could not have got rid of his money more foolishly! I remember that my father, passing the door of the King’s Arms one day, met this spendthrift coming out, “Man,” he said, “there’s the grandest company in there—splendid fellows! We’ve been in a’ day, and we’ve had 21 half mutchkin† o’ speerits!” He had paid for all this, and, of course, his cronies had only been too glad of the chance to accept his hospitality. But in a very short time his substance, like that of the prodigal in another land, was all wasted, and he fell back to the meagre and precarious income of a weaver.

Sometimes the story of both fortune and misfortune was coloured by a gleam of humour. Whilst at the loom one day Dan’l Wilson heard a rumour that a considerable sum of money had been left to him. Without troubling to verify the good news Dan’l hurried home.

\*We used the word for emphasis. “Eh man!” indicated great surprise. “Aye, man” had a note of doubt in it. “Man, Wullie” was a friendly method of approach. So also we said “Tibbie, woman” and “Betty, woman” by the way of “innerliness.”

† A mutchkin is an English pint.

As he entered his humble abode the first thing to catch his eye was a ham hung from the kitchen ceiling, for he had but recently killed the pig. “Ann,” he said, casting upon his astonished wife an eye which had a distinct “gley,” or squint,—“Ann, take down that ham and give it to the poor.” Ann, much astonished, sank into a chair whilst Dan’l explained. But Ann’s economic instinct prevented this needless generosity, and well it was so, for the money never came. Dan’l’s life was clouded by the disappointment, and he was often heard to declare that if the Almighty had been his only judge he would have been one of the richest men in Langholm. Those “ifs” keep us all poor.

## CHAPTER IV.

### CARTS AND COACHES.

IT is a far cry from the motor-car back to the staid old horse and cart, but the change has been accomplished well within my lifetime. During my earlier years the only means of travelling was by cart, except on the main road from Carlisle to Hawick. Here we had the stage coach, and though the railway was being dreamt of by sanguine people, it was as yet only something at which to marvel as we talked things over at the fireside, and the man who had seen a train dashing through the country at 10 or 12 miles an hour was considered to have seen life. In the Forties, Langholm had only heard of the railway, and the general opinion concerning it was that, though it might suit some restless people, yet the cart was better fitted to our requirements, and was also a good deal safer.

#### TRAVELLING BY CART.

So in my younger days the cart held the road, unquestioned both as to popularity and speed. Indeed, the man who travelled by cart, instead of on foot, was held to be inclined to extravagance. For the rich there was what was known as the post-chaise, but by ordinary folk it was resorted to only on very special occasions, such as an elopement to Gretna Green. The only vehicle of the kind that came regularly into Langholm was what

we called "The Burnfoot Tub." It was a conveyance, seated on the four sides, and in the middle was an enormous umbrella, built to shelter all the occupants from the rain or snow. Mentioning this umbrella reminds me that these were then both scarcer and bigger than they are now. I remember one of enormous size owned by my father, whose mother had witnessed their introduction. It served our whole household. The frame was, of course, of stout whale-bone, and the cover was not of silk and did not fold up neatly! My father always took it with him on his visits to the seaside, where to-day it would have created some sensation, not only from its size, but, perhaps, more from its colour. Only a few people in Langholm then possessed umbrellas, and men especially were a little bit ashamed to be seen carrying one. Nobody was then afraid of getting wet.

It was between Langholm and Annan, and between Langholm and Hawick, that the carts were in the most constant use, though I remember also a coach running on the Wauchope road, and its being upset one night at the Dumlinns. Seaside trippers were rare among us, and when we did go to the Solway it was because we had been ill, and not for pleasure, or because our next door neighbour had gone the year before. Those who sought the sea mostly selected Annan Water Foot, and they made the entire journey in a slate cart. The slates were brought to Langholm by the carriers, and then distributed to other places such as Hawick and Liddesdale. On the return journey the carters could take passengers, and the fare for the twenty odd miles was one shilling each passenger. It was not an exorbitant



rate when one remembers the length of the journey and the manifold experiences of the trip. Perhaps it was this moderate charge on which Willie Crozier formed his estimate when he sent his wife to Annan Water Foot for ten days, during her convalescence from a rather serious illness. Willie was always considered a "near" man. It was he who one Sacrament when he had nipped the corner off the bread put the rest in his tail-pocket, no doubt inadvertently. He had a strong scent for cash, and he gave his wife five shillings to pay her cart fare and to cover her outlay at that gay resort. The neighbours talked about it a good deal at the Pump, and Willie came in for some very uncharitable criticism.

The accommodation provided in the cart was, I confess, somewhat meagre. There were no cushioned seats, but along the side of the cart there was a bar—not a very broad one—on which the passenger sat, though if he preferred he could sit in the body of the vehicle. In special cases straw or hay might be provided to ease somewhat the effect of the jolting when the conveyance swept down the Falford Brae, but the carrier did not bind himself to make this provision—the straw was simply an evidence of his kindly disposition. It was said that the jolting sometimes effected a cure more surely than even the salt breezes from the Solway. Occasionally, one heard of passengers, mostly women, going off to Edinburgh, perched high on the top of a heavily laden carrier's cart. Men did such journeys on foot, taking advantage of a "chance" if one presented itself. I myself once walked all the way to Edinburgh, some 75 miles, in the depth of winter. The

journeys by cart always began immediately after midnight, in order to save double charges at the various toll-bars.

#### THE COACH.

Succeeding the cart came the stage coach, a quick\* and delightful means of travel, especially in the summer months, when meadow and moorland were alike beautiful to look upon. I have heard my grandfather, Jamie Armstrong, relate how he saw the first mail-coach that passed through Langholm. He stood on Langholm Bridge and watched it, drawn by four greys, cross the Ewes and up the Chapel Path, a road that would now be considered rough and dangerous. The arrival and departure of the coaches were the most exciting events of the day in our little town. One arrived from the south at 11·30 each forenoon, and another from the north at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. By them came our letters and newspapers; and we met the coaches just as people now meet the trains. The service was afterwards increased to two daily, from both north and south. There were others besides the mail-coaches running, but the latter met with the greatest popular favour, the red-coated driver giving them a special dignity. Each vehicle had a distinctive name, such as "Defiance,"

\* Since I wrote these sheets, Mr. Arthur Connell has written a letter to the *Eskdale and Liddesdale Advertiser* giving some interesting facts about travelling in the Thirties. I say the travelling by coach was "quick," and comparatively it was. But Mr. Connell mentions that on his first return from school in 1839, he left London at 8 a.m. on the Wednesday and arrived in Langholm at noon on the Saturday, and he adds that a friend who had recently come the distance by train in  $7\frac{1}{2}$  hours actually complained of its being a "very tedious journey!"

"Locomotive," "Engineer," &c. Horses were generally changed at Langholm, and I can remember seeing them taken down, on a hot summer day, to the Esk, to the Coach Horse Pool, a little above the Boatford Bridge, for a plunge in the cool water. I have seen them swimming about where, at present, is only a dry sand-bed. The bed of the Esk is much deeper now, worn away by many a heavy flood, and we seldom see, what was common in my young days, the river washing up the roadway on either bank.

My grandfather lived to see the mail-coach displaced by the railway, which never lost for him its wonder and romance; and, of course, the steamship also came into existence during his lifetime. Then the wagonette became the means of travelling, and it and vehicles of a like character were called "machines," often to the bewilderment of south country visitors.

#### CROSS KEYS.

In Langholm there was no noted coaching inn, but in Canonby there was the Cross Keys, and on the north, Moss paul. Both were celebrated hostelries, and many passengers broke their journey, to enjoy the wild beauties of the one or the gentler attractions of the other. The Cross Keys Inn has long been associated with the name of Sandie Elder.\* Sandie himself was, at one

\* In a most interesting lecture on his "Recollections of Ewesdale," given to the Eskdale and Liddesdale Archæological Society, after these pages were written, my nephew, Mr. James Graham, of Wishaw, related how one stormy winter night there had been a landslip at a ravine called Bruntcleugh, on Fiddleton Brae. The debris had been carried down by the syke, and nearly covered the bridge on the coach road. The surface men were still busy re-

time, the driver of a mail-coach, but left the road to settle down as the landlord of this famous wayside inn, then a "travellers' rest," and now a favourite haunt of fishers. Among many celebrities who frequented the Cross Keys, I remember at the moment the honoured name of John Bright. But Moss-paul, which was established as an inn as early as the middle of the eighteenth century, was the more famous of the two.

#### MOSSPAUL.

In my early days the landlord was Robert Govenlock, who also had seen service as a driver of a mail-coach. His hostelry stood on the site of the present hotel, half way between Langholm and Hawick, but occupied a much larger area. It stood on the summit of the watershed between Ewes and Teviot, the dwelling-house, I believe, being in the shire of Roxburgh and the office-houses in that of Dumfries. Govenlock had a seat under one of the large trees near the inn, and there he sat watching for the first appearance of the coaches. He could see far down Moss-paul Burn—the narrow pass between steep hills, where in the winter time so many coaches and carriers' carts came to grief in the great snow-drifts. The last time I was up the Burn I noticed, still standing, one of the snow-posts which were set up to guide the drivers past the dangerous bends.

The old Moss-paul Inn saw many famous personages moving the accumulation in the early morning, when the first coach going north, driven by Sandie Elder, was seen approaching. Instead of pulling up for a few minutes to allow the men to clear the road, Sandie, giving his team the whip, rushed the barrier, the near wheels of the coach just skimming along the parapet of the bridge—a skilful but rather reckless piece of driving.

pass that way, and not a few slept under its roof. Sir Walter Scott often came, and the visitors' book, now in the Hawick Museum, also contains the names of Warren Hastings, William and Dorothy Wordsworth, and W. E. Gladstone. It was during their Scottish tour of 1803 that the Wordsworths stayed at Moss-paul, but from what Dorothy Wordsworth says in her *Journal* of the tour, they do not seem to have been much impressed by anything, save the quiet and the bleakness of the surroundings. If the day was cold, one can well understand what her impressions would be.

#### CARRIERS.

The subject of travelling seems naturally to lead my thoughts to the carriers, whose carts were so conspicuous a feature of our main roads at that time. Langholm was divided into groups of trades, each group possessing some features peculiar to itself. There were the weavers, the carters, the carriers, and others, with a kind of freemasonry binding them to their fellows. Certainly, of these the carriers were among the most interesting. Their select themes of conversation, sprinkled so freely with anecdotes of accidents and storms, and other adventures, were very amusing and sometimes thrilling.

The carriers and carters usually set out immediately after midnight. This led to some serious mishaps in the stormy winter nights, and to not a few very odd adventures. Wrapped up in their plaids the drivers regularly went to sleep, trusting to the instinct of the horses to bring them to their intended destination. I

remember hearing my grandfather relate how one night he set off up the Ewesdale on a journey to Hawick, and, as usual, was soon asleep. He was wakened by the horse suddenly coming to a standstill, and, to his amazement, he found himself, by the light of the breaking day, in the courtyard at Carlesgill in Eskdale. The horse had of its own accord taken the turning out of Ewes into Sorby Hass, and going along that difficult and rough road, had forded the Esk at Burnfoot, got on to the Eskdale road, and then taken the next turning, which brought it to Carlesgill,—as far from Hawick as when it set out. On another occasion it turned right round, and some hours after leaving Langholm my grandfather found himself safely back in Buccleuch Square. I greatly regret that no record has been handed down of what my relative said on these occasions, but perhaps it does not matter, as in all probability I could not have printed his remarks.

Naturally, such episodes in the life of a carrier were kept strictly within his own family circle, and one can very readily understand his desire for secrecy! My grandfather seems to have had more than his share of strange adventures. One or two others I might relate.

In one of his journeys from Hawick to Langholm, one stormy snowy night, in coming down the Pass he was upset into the Burn and pinned under the cart heavily laden with meal, and there he lay for some hours before being rescued. This was one of many such adventures he met with on this exposed road, but he was a man of prodigious strength, such as I have often pictured his ancestors the freebooting Armstrongs to

have been, and he treated most of his adventures as of no account, but on this occasion he was compelled to admit that "he got the cauld!"

Another misadventure befell him when, being asleep, he tumbled off the cart and had his leg broken under the wheel. They found him lying at the Wrae Wood and brought him home in a cart, the broken leg, he declared afterwards, dangling over the end.

#### THE POSTMAN'S PREDICAMENT.

One very dark morning, just after midnight, as my grandfather was yoking his horse for a journey, he fancied he heard someone moaning. Taking the stable lantern he made a search, and, guided by the sound, discovered, to his consternation, a man, who turned out to be the Langholm postman, suspended by one foot from a window in an upper storey. He ran for a ladder, but of course his difficulty was how he could, unaided, get the man down. If he eased the window then the postman would fall to the ground head first, and, on the other hand, without doing so he could not extricate him. However, by the exercise of his great strength, my grandfather managed to hold the man with one hand whilst he eased the window with the other, and in this way he managed to release the postman, who was greatly exhausted. It transpired that the man was in the habit of walking in his sleep, and had got so far out by the window when it came down upon him and held him fast.

## A GHOST !

Another relative of mine had an experience which was even a greater trial to the nerve than this. He had left Wauchope toll-bar some time after twelve o'clock one dark night, and had reached Besse Bell's Brae, where the hills seem to close in, and the road lies through a narrow belt of wood planted on the edge of a cliff some fifty feet above Wauchope Water. He was settling himself down to sleep, dimly conscious of hearing a fox barking in the Calfield Shotts and the hoolet crying its weird, dismal cry in the Stubholm Wood, when suddenly as they were climbing the brae at the Dumlinns the horse stopped. On looking up he saw the cause. A white figure was coming silently and slowly down the hill towards them. The horse had not sufficient spirit to bolt, and its driver sat for a minute or two transfixed. The figure came through the sparse plantation on the hill side, crossed the road a few yards ahead of the horse, and made for the wood on the top of the dangerous cliff. Its peril seemed to nerve the driver, who jumped from his cart and pursued the seeming ghost, whom he caught just in time. It turned out that the white-robed wanderer was a half-crazed woman who had left her bed in a condition of bewilderment, drawn a sheet about her head, and wandered on to the hill. My relative got her safely into his cart and took her home. But he admitted that the incident gave him a "gliff."

## PEGGY.

But there lives in my memory a method of travel



more ancient and more quaint still than the carrier's cart. I can illustrate it best by the following incident: Near to Armless Rob and his gude-wife Nell there lived another queer old couple, Jock and Peggy. The latter belonged to Bewcastle, and it was one of the sights of the neighbourhood to see her set off to visit her own people. She went on horseback, even as she had come as a bride two generations before, for it was the custom in Bewcastle for brides thus to go to their new homes. Peggy was the only woman in Langholm who would mount a horse and set off across the country. It was formerly common enough to see a farmer and his wife coming to kirk or market on the same horse, he on the saddle and she on the croup behind—

“So light to the croup the fair lady he swung,  
So light to the saddle before her he sprung.”

Dr. Carlyle happened to call at their house one day and found Peggy, who was 84 years of age, sitting at the fire crying. She and her husband still kept up the old controversy on the question of his fondness for the bottle, which Peggy never ceased to deplore, and the doctor thought the tears were the evidence of another dispute on this account. But on enquiry he learned from Peggy that she had just received very bad news from Bewcastle about her mother! “Good heavens!” exclaimed the doctor, “you don’t mean to tell me you’ve got a mother? What age is she?” “She’s 104,” said Peggy, still crying, “and A’ll hae tae gan and see her.” The doctor asked how, at her great age, she intended making the journey into Bewcastle. She said that Jock had the cart leading coals, so she would just take the

other horse and ride. And she did ! I saw her set off on a horse as depressed and dispirited as ever took the road, a fit companion for Peggy in her distress.

I have already confessed my inability to describe women's dress, but at the risk of making a bungle of it, I must try to describe the bonnet in which Peggy arrayed herself for the journey to Bewcastle, for it struck us onlookers with wonder and awe. The material was straw, rather neatly plaited into strips about half an inch broad, each overlapping the one under it, as slates do on a roof, and no doubt to serve the same purpose. The "croon," which was not on top, but stuck out behind, was about the size of a fairly large flower-pot. The front of the bonnet opened out well away from the face, over which it projected at a considerable distance, and from this projection there arose a sort of decoration, which to my masculine eye looked like a fan-tailed pigeon. Over the bonnet were arranged some fancy ribbons, which tied under the chin, but the glory of them had long ago departed from Peggy's bonnet. If the wind was straight ahead the bonnet had a tendency to capsize, but in sunshine it afforded a useful bield, and in rain it served partly as an umbrella.

Peggy had had this bonnet for the best of fifty years. Once a year, usually about the summer Sacrament, the straw was all re-turned, and re-smoked with brimstone, and made quite fresh again. This smoking a straw hat with brimstone was a regular practice. I remember a fire being caused by it in the shop of a milliner—"a straw hat maker" she was called at that time. The smoking was being done in the garret, and the dish

capsized and set the house on fire. There was no fire-engine then, and owing to the fumes some difficulty was experienced in reaching the seat of the flames. My father was one of the men who mounted the roof and tore off the slates, and in this way got the fire put out. This had just been accomplished, when a queer old body who lived next door to the milliner drily remarked to him, "Aye, man, A' was glad ye got it oot. A' hed a lot o' gunpowder juist through the partition, and it wad hae been raither dangerous if it had ta'en fire!"

#### THE COMING OF THE RAILWAY.

The conveyance of passengers and goods by carriers' carts may seem a slow and old world method to moderns, who, between breakfast and dinner, can motor up to the head of Eskdalemuir and back, but in those quieter days we felt no dissatisfaction with the system, and scarcely dreamt that it was capable of improvement. But when the railway at last threw out its long arms and, as it were, took Langholm between its fingers, we all recognized that we had taken a big step in advance. There was tremendous excitement, not only about the fact of its coming, but also as to whether the main line from Carlisle to Edinburgh should go north by way of Ewesdale, or by the alternative route of Liddesdale. All over the western Border the question excited the most intense interest—indeed, I may say it provoked no little bitterness. Public meetings were held in Langholm, Hawick, Galashiels, Kelso, and other places in support of the rival routes. The line by Langholm and Ewes received a good deal of influential support, the Duke of

Buccleuch, among others, warmly approving of it. One of the most powerful arguments in aid of the Langholm route was the advantage the Canonby coal-field offered over that of Plashetts, and all its supporters spoke enthusiastically of the possibilities of the development of Canonby. One of the most exciting meetings during the whole agitation took place in Kelso in November 1858. Partisans of both schemes were present in large numbers, special trains being run from Edinburgh for the occasion. I have kept all the reports of these meetings, and they make rather amusing reading now after 50 years have gone by. Here is the peroration of the leading article of one of the Border newspapers at one stage of the question :—

“SILLOTH !”

“Silloth, Silloth, Silloth. The destinies of the north hang upon Silloth. One would suppose that the little crooked single line of rails leading thither was like the climate of Silloth, Silloth, Silloth—the best in the known world.”

At one time it seemed tolerably certain that the Parliamentary Committees would pass the Bill for the Langholm route. The Committee of the Commons actually did so, and there was unrestrained rejoicing when the news arrived. This was in May, 1858, but the supporters of the Liddesdale route could still fall back on that bulwark of our Constitution and “thank God for a House of Lords !” For when the Bill went there, the whole of the Netherby influence was thrown into the scale against it, and in July it was rejected.

Other schemes were proposed during the period of chagrin and disappointment, one of them being a line by the Caledonian Company from Kirtlebridge to Langholm. None of these was proceeded with, and ultimately the Liddesdale route was carried, and Langholm sustained the most serious commercial set-back in its history.

As everyone knows, a branch line was afterwards run up to Langholm from Riddings, on the main line from Carlisle to Edinburgh. Largely through the efforts of Mr. Hugh Dobie, a concession was granted to Langholm in that the fare to the north was calculated as if the line had run through Ewesdale—and not first gone half way to Carlisle,—a concession, I believe, which cannot at any time be withdrawn by the Railway Company.

It will be easily understood that the opening of the branch line was an event of historic importance to Langholm. The arrangements were at first intensely primitive. I remember my first trip very vividly. The carriages were little better than cattle trucks and were open to the weather. As we sped along a gust of wind came upon the train and lifted a man's hat right over into a field, an incident that afforded us great amusement. Naturally, many of the older folk declined to risk their lives in the train. Down into the Seventies there were many people, not in the country districts only, but also in Langholm, who had never taken a railway journey. When the Railway Company commenced running excursions, many people took advantage of them to visit Edinburgh and other places of which they had heard but never seen. Wullie Rickerby went with one of these

day-trips, but was quite homesick before the day was over. It was told of him that seeing some nettles growing on the Calton Hill, and thinking that nettles were peculiar to Langholm, he tenderly addressed them, saying, "Puir things, ye're like mysel'—ye're far frae hame!"

"NEAR ENEUCH THE EDGE."

When old John McGuire was at last persuaded to venture down to Riddings Junction to meet his wife coming from Silloth, he sat huddled up in the very centre of the carriage, scarcely daring to look to the right hand or to the left. As the train went over the viaduct at the Byreburn a fellow passenger asked John to come and see the fine scenery—one of the prettiest landscapes in the Eskdale valley. "Na, na," he nervously answered, "A'll sit where A' is. A's juist near èneuch the edge!" But before John had made his first trip the railway was almost a commonplace thing to most of us Langholm folk, and we had ceased to think it necessary to dress ourselves in our Sunday clothes for a journey to Carlisle.

CATCHING TRAINS.

By and by we got to speak, even as others did, of "catching a train," but the word was scarcely appropriate in our case, for we made it a practice to go to the station, as most of us went to the kirk, in ample time for the beginning. Nowadays, a great point seems to be gained if people have to chase the train along the platform and be half pushed into the carriage by the

guard. It has always puzzled me to discover where the merit lies in *catching* a train. To hear some men talk one would get the idea that it would have been more creditable to their reputation for smartness if they had just missed it. When Robbie "Gingham" had to go by train the five miles to Canonby to buy his seed potatoes he always made a day of it, and could be found at the station at half-past nine in time for the ten train. Robbie could never be hurried. We realized this when we saw him driving his pigs down Wauchope Raw.

During the somewhat flat time of waiting Robbie refreshed his mind with the scanty mural literature which then adorned Langholm station,—highly coloured posters of turnips and sheep-dip and the like. Indeed, when I come to think of it this was about the extent of Robbie's reading, save that on Sundays he might glance over the anecdotes in the *Christian Herald*,—all of which he implicitly believed—even those marked "U.S.A."

#### "NEW YORK!"

It took Langholm a long time to accommodate itself to the "hustling" style of life. Even now we are never quite sure of far-travelled folk, and I confess to a secret sympathy with a herd of whom the following story was told me by my nephew, the late Andrew Park, who with another Langholm lad had been in America for some years. They had just got settled in the train at Carlisle on their journey home, when a terrible commotion was heard along the platform. Presently a wild-looking herd, who, they soon learned, came from "the Bewcastle han'," banged into the carriage, followed by an

equally wild and frightened dog. In about three or four minutes the train moved off, whereupon the herd looked round at them, saying, excitedly, "By gocks! that's a near 'an—another five meenutes and A' wud hae been a dunner! Ir ye theer, Toss?" Toss gave an answering yelp, and the herd resumed, "Weel A' never! Did *ye* ever see ocht sae near as' that?" They remarked that he had been in plenty of time, and that in New York they would have considered they were far too soon—in fact they would have looked upon it as a waste of time. "New York?" he asked in surprise, "Hes thou been in New York?" "Yes," my nephew replied, "we have just come from New York." They were by this time slowing down for Harker Station, and the man got his hand on the door handle, and, looking at them very suspiciously but very knowingly, he retorted: "Aye, faith, my man, but thou'll no rob me!" And, darting on to the platform, he yelled for "Toss." The train moved off and left him, congratulating himself no doubt upon his happy escape.

This incident was not untypical of our estimate of foreign parts, which is singular, considering how many of its sons Langholm had sent abroad. I remember another incident which also illustrates this point.

When Andra Souter's son returned home after a couple of years in Chicago, someone enquired of Andra how the lad was doing "oot yonder." The old man had evidently not been very favourably impressed with the boy's conversation, and of course shared our general uncertainty as to American ways. So in his quick, jerky manner Andra replied: "Oh fast, fast, gey fast—talks



a lot aboot dollars and cents ; think pounds shillings and pence micht dae for him. Oh aye, he's fast !”

The last mail-coach rattled through the town on the 2nd July, 1862, and in November of the same year the construction of the branch railway was begun. The first train ran on Monday, 11th April, 1864, and after that memorable day we had a regular service. For years, however, the railway train continued to be a thing to marvel at. I remember an Eskdale farmer in the Seventies bringing his family in a cart to see this great sight. He drew up at a safe distance from the station, and when the train steamed into view the excitement was very great. We Langholm folks smiled, for we had been very familiar with trains for over ten years. We cracked many jokes over the incident, which I fancy was a kind of “Great Divide” in our local history—the passing entirely out of sight of an old era in the full blaze of a new day.

## CHAPTER V.

### SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLMASTERS.

IN the early years of the century much of the education of the country was in the hands of women, who sometimes seem to have reached a very high standard. An excellent type of the village schoolmistress was Miss Charlotte or "Chattie" Smith, to whom so high tribute was paid by Lieut.-General Sir Charles Pasley, who in Langholm kirkyard erected a stone to her memory setting forth that she had "been a teacher of youth in the town for more than half-a-century."

Like most Scottish towns, Langholm has always enjoyed the advantage of capable schoolmasters. We get an interesting glimpse into its school life in the memoir of Dr. David Irving, probably Langholm's most learned son, prefacing his *History of Scottish Poetry*. Irving's first teacher was one John Telfer, "who, judging from the proficiency of his pupils," says the biographer, "must have been a skilful and successful master." Later, Irving had as schoolmaster, one Dr. Andrew Little, who whilst surgeon of a Liverpool vessel lost his eyesight by lightning on the coast of Africa. Sir Charles Pasley, after he left "Chattie" Smith's school, was also a pupil of Dr. Little, and one gathers from his remarks that even then, about 1790, the standard of education in the town must have been high, both Greek and Latin being taught.

In my youth the principal schools in the town were the Parish and Broomholm Schools. The Parish School was in Buccleuch Square, and the Broomholm was in the Drove Road, at the top of the Brewery Brae. It possessed an endowment by the Broomholm family for the benefit of children whose parents were unable to pay the regular fees. These were very light, some six-pence a quarter for each scholar, as far as I now remember. The School was managed by trustees elected by certain householders. I went to this school after a preliminary course at a small school kept by one William Murray whose health, like that of Dr. Little, had suffered from residence abroad.

The teacher in the Broomholm School when I went was George J. Todd, who afterwards became master of the Parish School. He also acted as Inspector of the Poor, and to both offices he brought a stern sense of duty,—indeed, we boys thought his discipline was a trifle too stern, and, as shown by an incident which I shall mention later, he applied the same strict methods to his “relief” of the poor. Though I have good reason to remember his powers of discipline I am bound to say Todd was an excellent teacher. At that time there were nearly 100 boys in the school, and he taught us with no assistance, save what one or two of the elder boys could give by distributing copybooks and the like.

#### LESSONS.

Todd's special subject was handwriting, for which he was famed throughout the south of Scotland. Good handwriting was then considered essential in the edu-

cation of every boy, and I cannot help expressing regret that so little importance is attached to it now. Indeed, it appears to me that some folk make a really serious effort to write illegibly. I was discussing the subject one day with Lencie Armstrong, and he quite agreed with me. "Oh, aye," he said, in his own satirical way, "its a great point now just to puzzle folk wi' yer writing. A' understand that its considered a sign of genius if folk canna read yer signature, and the waur it is the mair its thocht o'." Lencie added that this apparent striving to write badly reminded him of an incident in his own school days. The scholars were bringing their copy-books for the master's inspection, and a shy nervous lassie handed hers in. "Weel dune yow, Tibbie Broon," said the master, in affected compliment, holding the bairn's copybook at arm's length, "ye're hand-o'-w-rite's getting waur and waur!"

Mr. Todd had not the appliances that modern schools possess. There were no cloak rooms or radiators or laboratories. The school furniture consisted of forms and desks of very rough construction, which seldom required mending. When they did, Peggy's Sandie came and put things right with a piece of deal and some three-inch nails, exactly the same materials he used in mending peat barrows and back doors. But Todd's educational ideas were advanced. He had a class in surveying, e.g., and on a Saturday he would take the lads out into the fields, and teach them the subject practically, and not merely from text books. He consulted a boy's parents as to his future, and then shaped the studies accordingly. If a boy was going to be a

joiner he did not cram him up with Latin grammar but set him on to mensuration, and if he was meant for the bank or the writer's office, he devoted special care to the subjects likely to be of service to him there.

Our principal reading book at "Todd's Schule," as it was popularly called, was McCulloch's *Course of Reading*. Younger scholars had a book called *Reading made Easy*, which in our young brains got muddled into *Reedamadeesy*! We boys graded our progress according to the price of the book; we advanced from the fourpenny to the sixpenny and on through the tenpenny and the fifteenpenny up to the half-a-crown. When we got to this stage we decided whether we would go to the University or the masoning, both of them held equally honourable then, though I suspect the boy of to-day scarcely thinks so. Of course, we also read largely from the Bible and the Shorter Catechism. A Bible lesson was often set as a punishment for evildoers, which was I think a great mistake. I knew one worthy who in this way (so he declared to the minister who was "catechising" him) got "sic a scunner" at the Bible that he could never read it afterwards. As to the Shorter Catechism, I was never greatly taken with it in my youth, though I did not doubt that it contained an excellent body of sound doctrine. But to get a boy of nine or ten to worry on with Effectual Calling and "dad his lugs" because he did not understand what it was all about, may have produced a nation of theologians, but it was a sad trouble and burden to boyhood. I have since learned to value the document, and have even found a certain edification in the

Confession of Faith, but in those early years the very name of the Catechism was distasteful to me. When Tom the Spider's horse kicked him on the head and so rendered him afterwards subject to "turns," he would suddenly stop you in the street and demand "What is the chief end of man?" and, without waiting for your answer, he would give it himself, then skip through the Decrees and the Reasons Annexed right on to the end of the Catechism, whilst you were forced to stand the while and appear impressed. I fancy he must have got the bias to this eccentricity at Todd's School.

Great care was taken to keep the books clean so that they could be handed down to other members of the family. To this desirable end we had to show our hands to the master each time we entered school. A boy who failed to pass this inspection was sent forthwith to wash his hands in Sorbie Syke which served as our school lavatory. If the boy had a handkerchief, which was extremely unlikely, he dried his hands on it, if not he dried them on his knickerbockers.

#### TRUANTS.

If, when the roll was called, a boy was absent, a deputation of his own schoolfellows was at once dispatched in search of him, the correct assumption being, not that he was ill, or that he was, what the minister in his prayer in the kirk called, "lawfully detained," but that he was playing truant, a practice in which every healthy boy occasionally indulged. Very often the missing student was found busy at the marbles or the paps, or was discovered "rinning his gird" down

the Kirkwynd. He was then dragged back to school and to the stern justice of Mr. Todd who, we fancied, had never been a boy, nor ever had a "gird" or marbles or any of those things which were dear to us lads. Discipline having been re-asserted, the truant was left in a quiet and subdued frame of mind for the remainder of the day. When little Wullie Beattie was dragged to justice by these scouts, he innocently "claimed exemption" from the tawse on the ground that he had been "rinning the cutter,"\* for Tippie Jamie, who had bribed him with a halfpenny. Mr. Todd's face at that moment was like a thunder-cloud in Tarras.

After my school days there grew up a custom of "barring oot the maister." This took place always on the Shortest Day, which became known as "Lock-out Day," and the adventure was extremely popular with the boys. By some means or other they obtained possession of the school keys, and entering in the early morning barricaded the doors, and then held high carnival in the school, which was speedily transformed into a perfect bedlam. It was said the schoolmasters winked at the practice, but I should have liked to have seen George J. Todd had any of us less fortunate boys a generation earlier tried to lock him out! We made no pretence of "loving" our master, but we greatly revered him for his powers with the tawse!

The mention of tawse reminds me that this accessory to our education was prominent—indecently prominent throughout my youth. As well as in the school, a formid-

\* Fetching drink.

able pair hung in a needlessly obtrusive position in the home, and in addition to both we had also to bear Jean Thomson's in mind. Where Jean got the moral sanction for her punishment of bairns innocently playing about the street I did not then, nor do I now, understand, but not even one's parents seemed to question her authority. Tommy Young once made the teacher a present of a very repulsive looking pair of tawse. Every boy in the school resented this as an act of base treachery, and great was the enthusiasm when he himself was the first to get the benefit of them !

#### SCHOOLMASTERS' SALARIES.

The teachers of both schools in Langholm were highly qualified men. Mr. Todd had classes in French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and boys could go from his school direct to the University. The remuneration was very small. The parish schoolmaster was paid £20 a year by the kirk session, and made out a living wage by the addition of scholars' fees. It has often been charged against the village schoolmasters of Scotland that they eked out their incomes by holding exhibitions of cock-fighting. Such a practice was never heard of in Langholm within my recollection. On Candlemas Day, which from time immemorial has been a special day in the Scottish calendar, a gratuitous levy was made for peats or coals for heating the school during the winter time. The boy who gave the largest sum was king of the school, and likewise the girl who gave most was queen. Part of the honour given to the boy was that he was carried shoulder high by the other lads, from which ceremony



his clothes generally emerged very much damaged. There was one feature of this custom of giving coal-money which was greatly to be deplored. When a boy went up to the master's desk to pay over his sum he was treated to whisky, and the girls to light wines, and biscuits were served out to both. These were not dainty morsels such as we are now familiar with, but solid and substantial cakes about six inches in diameter.

So began our winter session.

#### OTHER SCHOOLS.

After the Disruption another school was begun by the Free Kirk and it soon developed into a large one. The first master was a Mr. Easton, a namesake of one of the former parish schoolmasters, and this school was known as "Easton's Schule." I remember a somewhat stiff fight taking place at it between two boys, one of whom happened to be the son of the Free Kirk minister. The news of the combat soon penetrated to the minister's study, and he of course felt it his duty to point out to the boy that he had done a very wicked thing in fighting with a schoolfellow.

He was quite gentle in his rebuke, and turned up the Gospel according to St. Matthew to show the lad that beautiful passage from the Sermon on the Mount, which enjoins us when smitten on one cheek to turn the other also.

To this exalted precept the minister's son replied, "that this micht be a' vera weel in Palestine, but at Easton's Schule it simply wadna dae!"

There were other "schools" in Langholm, some of

them like the cave of Adullam,—a refuge for the discontented and distressed—for boys who had been invited to leave one of the others. Curious places some of them were, conducted often in the “ben” end of a cottage which was as destitute of the appliances of education as the schoolmaster’s head was of knowledge. Opening a school was often regarded as the last resource of a lazy man, but the inefficiency of such establishments only served to enhance the reputation of the regular schools.

As illustrating the lack of knowledge shown by some masters, I may mention an incident in the days of Auld Ned of Wauchope. I was busy with some repairs at the Schoolhouse, when one day Ned came to me in a state of considerable perplexity turning over the leaves of a book, which he seemed to regard with some concern. Still fingering the book and adjusting his specs, he said to me, “Here’s a boy come to my schule and he’s brocht a buik—A’ dinna ken what it’s aboot, A’ve never seen yin like it afore, there’s some o’ the queerest things in’t!” And he handed the book for me to examine. It was only an English grammar, none other than our venerable friend Lindley Murray. Ned seemed to meet the educational requirements of Wauchope without the slightest acquaintance with syntax. Decent men, too, his scholars turned out in after life, though, to use Mr. Smellie’s way of putting it, they could not tell a noun from an adjective if they saw the two of them walking together along the High Street of Langholm.

I fancy that Ned’s remuneration took the shape, for the greater part, of peats and swede turnips.

## CHAPTER VI.

### HER MAJESTY'S MAILS.

IT is doubtful whether during my lifetime there has been a greater advance in anything than in our postal arrangements. This applies to the whole country of course, but in Langholm especially the post-office 70 or 80 years ago was a primitive concern.

#### POSTAL RATES.

The postage rates in those days were a very serious charge. They were not prepaid, but were payable on delivery. I remember that when letters from my uncle in India were delivered a fee of 5/- had to be paid, and it can be understood that letters were not written needlessly. A letter from Edinburgh cost 8½d., from Carlisle 6½d., Annan 7½d., Longtown 4½d., London 1/1½d., Sunderland 8½d., Dumfries 8½d. When Pete Graham's brother went to America he was very homesick, and endeavoured to relieve his feelings by writing frequently to his father and mother, forgetting, in his love of home, that they, poor souls, had to pay the postage. When his letters came quickly one upon another, the cost mounted up, and so his father wrote him to this effect: —“Now Jock, if ye're weel so much the better, and if ye're doing weel yer mother and me's vera glad tae hear't, and if ye're no weel we're vera sorry, but we canna help it, and as the postage between America and

Langholm runs pretty high, I must insist that the correspondence be stopped!" Jock, however, did not remain long in that mighty land of freedom. When the Common-Riding Day came round he absented himself from work, and, on being asked by his employer for an explanation, he turned on the man his piercing eye—which had a distinct cast in it—and said, quietly but very impressively: "Div ye think for yin moment that a man's gaun tae work on the Langholm Common-Riding Day?" Jock lost his situation through his love of Langholm and resolved to return home. He had not the means to pay his passage, but it is related how, being a capital performer on the fiddle, he "fiddled" his way across the Atlantic and landed in Langholm safe and sound, and was boisterously welcomed back by his old associates.

#### LETTERS BY CARRIERS.

On account of the high postage rates, letters were often sent by carriers, whose charges competed successfully with those obtaining in Her Majesty's service. But in actual practice the posting of a letter was resorted to only in cases of emergency. An opportunity to send a letter or a message was offered, perhaps, by some one travelling near to a place, and a chance of this kind was seized to send a whole budget of family news. The taking advantage of a chance was well illustrated on the occasion of the death of a Hawick man. As his end drew near, so the story goes, one neighbour after another dropped into the sick room to send a message to some relatives who they were perfectly sure were in Heaven.

At last one woman came, who entrusted to the weary man so many messages, that at length he protested. Slightly raising himself, he said "Weel, if A' see them A'll tell them, but ye maun understand that A'm no gaun clank-clanking through Heeven lookin' for your folk." The hint here as to the noise of the clogs and calkers on the golden pavement seems to suggest the idea that Heaven, like all places of any consequence, bore a striking resemblance to Hawick.

#### POST-RUNNERS.

The letters for country places were distributed by post-runners, as they were called. They had long distances to go, and took their own time over the delivery. Of course, people were in no hurry then, and no one ever dreamt of writing to the Postmaster-General about a late delivery, or even of grumbling (over initials) in the local newspapers; indeed, there was a vague feeling that it was partly owing to the goodwill of the postman that letters were delivered at all. So the business career of the post-runner was neither a hurried nor a troubled one. It was told of old Tom Robson, who "ran" with the letters from Langholm to Hawick, that he would fish up Ewes and down Teviot, and if the trout were "taking" he took his own time in the delivery of the mail, which would simply be late that day. Knowing Tom's leisurely habits, it was something like irony to say that he "ran" with the letters, but the point did not occur to any of us then.

After Tom's system ceased to be, there came Willie Beattie. On one of his journeys Willie was tied to a

tree in the Wrae wood and his letter bag opened and rifled. For years the perpetrator of this outrage remained undiscovered, until a convict, under sentence of death in Staffordshire, confessing his crimes before being hanged, admitted that he was the robber, and that this was his first step to the gallows. The man was a tramp weaver, and had for some time been working at the cotton mill in Langholm. After this stirring incident Willie was furnished with a brace of pistols, but instead of proving a protection this was his undoing. One day, whilst off duty in Hawick, Willie was cleaning one of the pistols when it suddenly went off and shot him dead.

#### THE POSTMAN'S BAG.

The olden-time postman had not that official air which, probably, can only come with a uniform. He would come in and hear the news there might be in any letter whose writer he could guess. And, occasionally, he would break his journey at some inn and refresh himself,—not wisely but too well. For a considerable time he might in this way disappear from the ken of those who eagerly awaited his coming. His postman's bag was nothing more than "the croon o' his hat," and when he thus indulged, his letters were soon thrown into confusion. I remember an incident of this kind happening to the postman of my early years. He was expected in from his rounds at a certain time, and when that hour was far past it was thought well to send someone to look for him. He was found sitting asleep against a wall in that corner of Arcady known as the

Well Close, with the contents of his bag scattered around him. To-day, I suppose, there would have been a mass of correspondence in blue envelopes about the matter, but it was not thought necessary then to report such an occurrence, indeed, the Langholm people would have greatly resented any such action.

But Langholm was more highly favoured in its postal facilities than neighbouring places. It was on the main coach road, and the deliveries were fairly regular. To places in the country there was a scale of additional postage. For instance, the rate to Copshaw, or almost any part of Liddesdale was the Langholm rate, with a penny added. The runner into Liddesdale was Wattie Borthwick, who travelled the road daily for many years. Letters for places distant from the highway were left till called for, at some wayside cottage, where they might lie for days, until someone from the upland house happened to drop in—"gied a cry in" as we termed it. It was in this way that the toll-bars became such splendid centres for the collection and distribution of news and gossip. To spend an evening in a "bar" was almost equivalent to reading a well-stocked newspaper—and a great deal more entertaining. Of course, the keeper of the toll-bar was under no obligation to deliver the letters—he was not recognised by the Government at all, the letters simply lay there until some chance offered to send them up-by.

#### BET THE POST.

The letters to Eskdalemuir were carried twice a week, on Wednesdays by Michael Byers, and on Saturdays by

Bet the Post. When up in the Muir, I had occasion now and again to witness Bet's arrival at her destination, and one was able to detect by certain symptoms that she had transacted business, not only at the Bentpath Inn, but one or two additional houses of call.

Many people still living in Langholm are able to remember the letters being delivered by auld

JOHNIE LINTON,

and his being on special occasions assisted by Jennie, his wife, who did not hesitate to take the bundle from his hands and distribute the letters herself. Johnie was what we called "a canny man,"—he had a cheery word for all his customers, and frequently sat down in their houses to rest himself and retail all the news he had collected on his rounds. He was popularly known as "Laird Linton," not because he possessed a single acre of land, but from his persistent practice, when he reached a certain stage of convivial feeling, of singing his favourite song "The Laird of Cockpen," even though the business men of the town were at that moment hunting for him in all directions to obtain their letters. These vocal efforts were sometimes just a little trying to those who were eagerly expecting his opening the door and handing in a letter—of course there were but few houses in Langholm where Johnie was expected to knock.

His drifting into the "Laird o' Cockpen," when I come to think of it, was an illustration of a habit frequently shown in Langholm. We had men who after two, or perhaps three, drams would unfailingly steer towards





JOHNIE LINTON.

certain themes. I remember one, who, after his third glass, could be absolutely relied upon to recite Wilson's poem of "Wattie and Meg," and another who just as surely commenced a discussion on the doctrine of Predestination, indeed I should say on reflection that the Confession of Faith was more discussed by the weavers at the looms or in their convivial hours than it was in the Presbyteries.

## DEVELOPMENTS.

When envelopes were introduced, about 1839 if my memory is right, a great improvement was at once effected in our postal system. Before that date the paper, known as post-paper, had to be folded in a particular way and then sealed. The establishment of penny-postage was of course the greatest reform. Like all innovations it led to some curious errors. A common one was for people to put the letter and the penny into the box together. Many a year elapsed before some of us could be got to understand that the contents of their letters were not known to the post-office officials. Letter writing was then practised on a more elaborate scale than it is now when communication is so easy. The letters were longer and more interesting, there was no "excuse haste" about them, or "rushing to catch the post" phrases which I greatly dislike to see in a letter, even as I dislike to be urged to reply "by return of post." I could never see the necessity for this haste. When I get a return-of-post letter I lay it aside for a week. With most of the stay-at-home folk letter writing was too serious a task to be lightly or frequently undertaken. The orthodox style was, of course, to say that you were "sitting down" and "lifting the pen to write you these few lines to let you know," and so on. When Tom Scott's boy went to Copshaw to learn the tailoring they got him to see that it was his duty to write home to his father and mother. After much preparation he began; and his parents were a little surprised to have from him a letter, beginning "Dear Phaim and Tom,"—the designation of them current in Wauchope Raw.

Of course the greatest sensation—greater even than the coming of the railway,—was that which arose when the electric telegraph, as it was usually called, became an actual fact. Ordinary folk, and old people especially, were filled with wonder and amazement. A great deal of misunderstanding existed concerning the means of communicating the messages, and I can recall the prophecies of evil uttered by the old-fashioned among us. By the time the telephone had come all our capacity for wonder had been lost.

## CHAPTER VII.

### OUR AMUSEMENTS.

WHEN I look back to my early years and contrast the amusements popular then with those of to-day, I am deeply impressed by the elevation in tone which is everywhere apparent. I can safely apply to the enjoyments of the Thirties and Forties, a term at one time frequently heard in Langholm, but now used only by old folk—the word “uncultivated.” To us, the word expressed everything that was rough or lacking in delicacy, and I think it was to our amusements that it could be most fittingly applied. To say this throws no special reflection on Langholm, of whose reputation and honour I have ever been most jealous. The relaxations of all sections of society in those days, would not now be tolerated, and this applies to the Court as well as to the peasantry.

#### FIGHTING.

On days of celebration, such as Fair days and holidays, fighting was regarded as the height of enjoyment, and by a certain part of the community it was indulged in enthusiastically. Dickens says of the labourers of Seven Dials that their only recreations were fighting, and leaning against posts! In Langholm 70 years ago we would have been very glad indeed if some of our townsmen and neighbours had taken to leaning against

posts as an alternative recreation, but they varied the fighting only by drinking. It was quite a regular practice for men to come in from the country districts for the express purpose of "licking" some Langholm antagonist, and a love of truth compels me to say that the Langholm men made no effort to shirk the combat. These men had no personal quarrel: they wished simply to see who was the better man, as they expressed it, though, of course, personal feeling did sometimes arise.

I have referred to a fight which took place on Moodlawpoint Square, but a more serious one still was that which came to be known as the "Battle of Jouker's Close." This well-known locality, conveniently situated near to the old Jail, has witnessed many fights of one kind and another, but this one of which I write was the most famous fight of all. It originated in some trivial matter of opinion between a Langholm man, an old pensioner, and an "incomer," a Highlander named Campbell. They retired to this duelling ground to adjust the difference, and the weapons selected were swords. Long and exciting was the conflict, for both were expert swordsmen, but at length the Langholm man disarmed his opponent and claimed the victory. "Sue for peace," he cried to him in the customary terms of warfare. "I scorn your mercy," answered the Highlander, "Strike; a Campbell knows how to die!" Honour was satisfied. The Langholm warrior offered his hand and peace was sealed in the "Highland Laddie" Inn.

I might tell of many "fights" into which not a little of the comic entered, such for example as were induced

by Johnie Weave's unceasing crusade against tramps. These rows occurred with fair regularity, but we could always depend on two or three at least on a Summer Fair night, when Langholm High Street was vocal with musical tramps, in for the Fair.

"See them there Johnie?" some one would say, and up he would go with flashing eye to order them out of the town.

"Ye're back again wi' them feet o' yours," he would begin, and in a minute or two the whole atmosphere became electrical. Johnie would advance in his denunciation, referring to his enemy as "a muckle lazy scoondrel," and then probably threaten "tae kaim his heid wi' a nibbie," not infrequently suiting the action to the word.

On reviewing these incidents I should say that nine times out of ten Johnie got the worst of the exchanges, but these reverses never damped his ardour against the tramps.

I fear I would be lacking in my duty to Johnie's memory were I not to tell the story of the tramp who went one day to his house and demanded his tea. It was a practical joke on the part of the weavers hanging aimlessly about Moodlawpoint. A tramp hobbling along with the aid of a crutch and a stick came up to them and begged. They declined, but one of them, with a marvellous inspiration, bethought him of Johnie.

"No," he said to the man, "A' canna help ye, but if ye like to gan up to that hoose there ye're sure to get something, the man's awfu guid to gan-aboot folk."

They directed the man to the house but called him back to explain that "the man," that is, Johnie, strong-

ly disliked any ceremony—he must go right in and say he had come for his tea.

The weavers followed to see how this would end, but before they got to the door a crutch landed out on the middle of the road, quickly followed by a “nibbie.” Then came the tramp himself, and behind him Johnie, his eyes blazing with righteous wrath.

“Johnie, Johnie,” remonstrated the weavers, “what does a’ this mean?”

“Mean?” girmed Johnie, “the muckle scoondrel juist cam’ in and demanded his tea!—said some men had sent ’im. A’ll ‘tea’ him,” he continued, taking another running kick at the tramp, until the bystanders thought the joke had gone far enough. I wish I could convey in cold black print the inflection which Johnie brought into his voice on these occasions,—his delightful and subtle breathing of the aspirate into the middle of a word, and his grip of the old Scots tongue which always reminded me of a terrier worrying a rat, but these I cannot describe, and consequently my story loses much of its flavour.

The fights I am referring to were not conducted under Queensberry rules, but were nothing less than brutal and unrestrained attacks upon each other. The general sense of the community was not much opposed to them, I fear, but the respectable and church-going part of the people regarded the proceedings with disgust.

#### FISHING.

In vivid contrast to this amusement was the gentle recreation of fishing, which in my early years was ex-

tremely popular. There were then no Fishery Associations, nor any laws that I can recall, prohibiting free fishing, though certain very picturesque methods of securing the fish were held to be illegal. A splendid pastime was fishing by torchlight. The Esk was not well suited for this sport, but in the Waters of Ewes and Wauchope it was often followed, and a weird sight it was of a dark night to see the "burning of the water." One man would walk up the river carrying a blazing torch, and on either side of him would be men armed with leisters. When the salmon was struck by the leister it would probably turn and run down stream, and then an exciting chase would occur, during which both the men and the torch would probably be "dookit" in the water before the fish was safely landed.

#### "GUDDLING."

A ducking was even more certain if "guddling"\* was the recreation. Possibly it was owing to this certainty that with us boys it was so much more popular than fishing, and I can see it is so with later generations also. There was this added attraction to "guddling," that it partook of the nature of poaching, which was then indulged in to a greater extent than it is to-day.

Not a few men in Langholm set out to fish the burns but early in the day the "wand" so we called it then: it is "rod" now,—was thrown aside and "guddling" resorted to. One of the most noted exponents of the art was Jamie Baxter, better known as "the auld corporal." Jamie knew the best "cast" in every river and

\* In some places called "tickling the trout."



burn in Eskdale, and he knew every stone under which a sea-trout was likely to be found.

"Juist wait a meenute, man," he would say to a brother-fisher, "till A' gan doon here and get a sea-trout."! Off they would set for the pool, Jamie explaining by the way that they "couldna fail to get it: he kenned exactly where it would be." Then creeping cautiously up to the stone and feeling with his hands carefully round it, he would probably jump up in a rage: "Aye, A' thocht sae. He's been here."

"Whae's been here?" his friend, of course, enquired.

"Jim Donly," Jamie would answer, "he kens the bit."

Donly was one of our recognised poachers. He filled in his spare time by quarrying on Whita Hill.

I have heard my father tell how, when the news of the victory of Waterloo came, he, an apprentice at the time, was with his uncle San—which is Alexander—and some others on a scaffold building a house in Westerkirk. The post runner "cried" the news to them, and at once there was intense excitement. "Boys," said his uncle, who had charge of the job, "this is great news—A' dinna mind a bottle o' whuskey at the Bentpath owre 't." On hearing this the masons immediately dropped their tools, whereupon, turning to my father and the other apprentices, uncle San continued, "Yow boys, it' no fit for yow to think o' speerits: ye can gan and hev a day's guddling!"

They went, but it was much less exciting up Byken Burn than among the patriots assembled in the Bentpath parlour!

## POACHING.

Some very exciting, and not always harmless, incidents arose through the illegal pursuit of game. The Game Laws were very strict in those days, and a man was liable to capital punishment for offences which would to-day be dealt with in the burgh police courts. The spirit of the old forest laws still lived in country places, and I really believe their severity encouraged rather than discouraged poaching. The hardness of the times also tended to this end, besides there was a dash of adventure about it which appealed to the Borderer.

I relate the following, however, not because of its adventure, but to show how even harmless kind of men were not averse from the risk and excitement. Tommy Douglas was a canny, well-behaved man, whose "total depravity" was best revealed by his delight in snaring hares. One day, however, he was caught in the act up by the Becks Burn and brought before the Sheriff.

## TOMMY'S DEFENCE.

On being charged Tommy set up the following ingenious defence, which I give in his own words as literally as I can now recall them:—"This is about the queerest thing A' ever kent," he began. "After A' get to bed A' aye dream a lot, and that vera nicht A' dreamt that there was a hare in a girn at the Becks Burn. As weel as dreamin', A' often walk i' my sleep—and then A' dae some gey queer things! Sae what did A' dae that nicht but rise i' my sleep and walk owre tae the

Becks Burn! A' was soond asleep, and if it hadna been the middle o' the nicht some yin at the Meikleholm wad hae turned me, but nane saw me, and sae A' landit at the Becks Burn, still soond asleep, when tae my surprise, a gameguard lays his han' on my shooder and says, 'Ye're poaching.' It's the queerest thing that ever A' kent, how A' could gan sae far in my sleep—it was the dream that did it."

It was a clever plea, but it was currently remarked by those present in the Court that the Sheriff, with his legal training, "saw throw't" He remarked, in reply, that there was no evidence to show that Tommy did *not* dream that night, but if he let him go this time he must take care not to dream again. "Oh, there's nae fear o' that," answered the guileless Tommy, reassuringly, "for A'll juist get oor fook tae lock the door and tak the key tae bed wi' them—that should keep things richt." And Tommy added, rather unnecessarily we all thought, "Ye see, travelling in this way through the nicht nicht vera easily get a man intae mischief." The Sheriff smiled, and pointed out that it was very strange that the dream should take him to the precise spot where the hare was in the girn. "Aye," continued Tommy, "that's the queerest thing aboot it, but oor fook are gan tae look better efter the doors, for this kind o' thing will never dae fook'll begin tae think A'm a poacher."

#### SERIOUS CASES.

But many of the cases were not quite so amusing as Tommy's. I was an eye-witness of an exciting scene

which might have had serious consequences. For a long time the gamekeepers had been on the look out for a man, and one day they ran their quarry to earth in the Bush Inn. The poacher was a strong and determined man, and resisted to the last. The keepers got the assistance of the local constables, who very feebly acted as our policemen, and at last they got him dragged to the street, where a post-chaise was in readiness to convey him to Dumfries Jail. By setting his feet against the machine the poacher foiled the efforts of the constables to get him inside, and occasionally he made them all scatter right and left. The struggle was carried on the whole afternoon, so long, indeed, that the man managed to get a message for help conveyed to the Hollows Mill to his brother Pete, a bigger and stronger man than himself. The two of them were notorious as the best fighting men in the district. Pete got word that the constables were "ill-using" his brother Jock, and, vowing vengeance on them all, he set off immediately for Langholm. But he was too late. As he came through the Town-foot toll-bar, armed with a stout cudgel he had pulled from the hedge on the way up, the post-chaise, with Jock aboard, was rattling through the toll-bar of Wauchope at the other end of the town. The keepers and constables had at length secured Jock with ropes, after the "machine" had suffered considerable damage from his big clogs. It was an exciting afternoon, and there was general relief expressed at Pete's being late, for had he come ten minutes earlier there would certainly have been bloodshed. But we did not envy the guardians of the law their ride to Dumfries.

This happened on the day that Thomas Keir of the Potholm was buried. The two events are associated in my mind, because among the Potholm servants, all of whom had got new black suits for the funeral, was a young man whom I saw hanging on to the rear of the chaise—standing on the bar he really was—and kicking the “machine” as furiously as he could, to show his sympathy with Jock. This lad and his brother, with some others, were afterwards arrested on suspicion of causing the death of a gamekeeper in the wilds of Bewcastle. One of them committed suicide in Carlisle Jail on the eve of the trial, which ended in a kind of “not proven” verdict.

I had for some years in my employ as quarryman a very powerful man, standing over six feet,—the last man in Langholm, he was, to wear the old stuff “tile” on week days. He was an inveterate poacher, and found himself one fine day in Dumfries Jail. He made a daring escape, but injured himself in the attempt. A woman, however, came to his help and he got clear away. For years he lived under an assumed name, finding work in remote quarries, but the dread of re-arrest so haunted him that at last he gave himself up to justice.

I recall another tragic case. Three young men, merely for sport of the thing, arranged to have a night's poaching in the Flask Wood. They unfortunately took into their confidence another—a notorious poacher, pickpocket, and card-sharper, a perfect scoundrel, who informed the authorities of the proposed raid. A scuffle ensued in which some of the keepers were

seriously wounded. The youths were tried before the Sheriff and committed, but bail was accepted. Learning from their advocate that the sentence would probably be transportation, they forfeited their bail and fled the country.

There was another form of "poaching" practised in Langholm with which the law did not deal so severely. It took the form of stealing vegetables and other produce from the gardens, which, by the wisdom of "Good Duke Henry," third Duke of Buccleuch, the tenants of all the houses in the New-town of Langholm enjoyed. Why stealing cabbages or carrots was a less serious offence than stealing rabbits is a puzzle too deep for my intellect, but so it was. These garden thefts became a serious nuisance, and, I am sorry to say, certain weavers were strongly suspected of the offences. My friend, the late Walter Miller, was much annoyed in this way and set a watch. One day he got a glimpse of a man in the act of escaping from his garden with a fair load of produce, but the glimpse was enough to put him on the track. He suspected one Davie Harper, but could never just catch him at it. In course of time Davie was gathered to his fathers, who, I might remark, had not enjoyed a very high reputation in the town. Then came Davie's broken-hearted widow, who in his life-time had kept up a continual scrimmage with her departed husband, to Mr. Miller to beg some timber to set railings round Davie's grave. "No," said my friend, with a characteristic twinkle in his eye, "No, Nannie, when Davie was alive neither railings nor palings could keep him out of any place, and now that he's deed he

needs nae railings to keep him in." Nannie saw the delicate suggestion and did without the timber !

#### CURLING.

Curling was much more enthusiastically followed in my early years than it is now, and I, who have been an enthusiastic curler for over 50 years, cannot but deplore the change of taste. To be out on the Becks Moss on a cold, frosty day in December, with just a touch of snow in the air, when the ice was keen and the player keener, was simply unapproachable as a recreation, —and it was good for one's health as well. I remember getting a touch of bronchitis one severe winter, and being ordered by Dr. Carlyle, to keep in the house. I obediently followed his advice, and day after day passed, on which I saw the curlers go and come and heard wonderful stories about the ice. Then it dawned upon me how simple I had been. Next morning when Sergeant Pearson called to enquire about my bronchitis, I was ready to go with him to the pond. I had a day's splendid enjoyment, and I left the bronchitis on the Becks Moss ! The doctor called to see me during the day, and when he learned that I was off to the curling—well, I shall not repeat what he said, but when we met he expressed himself in language which I could not fail to understand ; but I cared not, for the curling had cured the ailment. I do not wish to recommend this treatment in all cases of bronchitis, but my special form of disease just seemed to need the fresh air of the Becks Moss. But I am again digressing.

Even the royal game of curling has yielded to changes of fashion, both in the curlers themselves and in their

style of play. Go to a pond to day and you will see men, daintily dressed, sweeping—not “soopin”—the rink with besoms which were originally designed for drawing room carpets. In my younger days we went clad in good warm homespun, which even the winds of Wauchope could not pierce, and we cut our besoms from the broom which grew on the Meikleholm Scaur, and on the stalks we notched the score. I can recall some specially severe frosts when we forsook the pond and curled on the Esk, even on the dark waters of the Skipper’s Pool.

On the ice we were all on an equality. The curling pond ranked with the old parish school as the leveller of distinctions—the laird and his cottar played in the same rink and forgot their inequalities. A very sociable game is curling, and until the Sergeant had announced in that regimental voice of his, that “Coffee’s ready,” there would be, just now and again, a “tasting” of something stronger,—something with the flavour of the moors about it, for often it had been distilled quietly and without observation up some lonely burn-side. Then there were the journeys to play local or bonspiel matches, the jokes, often enough personal but never in bad taste, the repartee, with our wits made sharper by the keen frosty air, the elation of victory, the depression of defeat, the beef and greens at the end—are not such memories written deep upon the heart of every curler?

Keen interest was always shown in the matches with neighbouring clubs—Eskdalemuir, Canonby, Ewes, and Westerkirk, and occasionally there happened events



which were more exciting. I remember a two-rink deputation going one day from Langholm to play the Liddesdale Club. Their way was by the Tarras road, and they had with them a cart carrying the stones. They were not far up the hill when there arose a terrific storm of wind and snow, such, probably, as we have never since experienced. They persevered, however, and managed to get down into the Tarras valley, but finding the road blocked, had to return, which they did with much difficulty. Then it was discovered that one of their company was missing. A search was made and he was found lying unconscious and nearly covered with drifting snow. They managed to get him into the cart and brought him home, where they arrived in a state of exhaustion. My informant told me that his own plaid blew away, but he was so convinced that they would never reach Langholm alive that he did not trouble to go after it. To show the indomitable spirit that animated these heroes, I must mention that next day they again attempted to make the journey, but met with no better success. The Tarras roads were still blocked with huge snowdrifts, and once more they had to return, defeated, not by Liddesdale, but by the wild elements which raged on Tarras Moss.

I curled until the weight of years and the weight of the stones, which at one time I needed not to reckon, proved too heavy, and I had to retire to the side of the rink and watch the game. Of late years I have heard the story of the day sitting here at the fireside, and often as I have listened or have mused on past days, I have once more in my fancy "skipped" a rink on the keen,

black ice, and felt again the sting of the snell wind as it swirled down the Wauchope valley.

#### FOOTBALL.

Football, too, was a common game in the earlier half of the century, but it was not played according to rules printed in a book, nor was there any referee. We played the game as our Border forefathers played it on the Murtholm holm in the intervals of their raiding—that is, as many as could took part, until frequently it became something just short of actual riot. The ball was a very crude affair, made of pretty tough leather by some local shoemaker. The limit of play was bounded only by the size of the field, and we had no half-backs or other modern arrangement of the players. There was a goalkeeper who did not “keep goal,” but “watched hail.” Three “hails” were counted as a victory.

I remember a match being arranged to be played at the Craig, between Langholm and Westerkirk. The late Mr. Malcolm of Burnfoot supported the proposal with the idea of encouraging a healthy rivalry in sport. However, with the crowd there came a man selling whisky, and in a very short time the match developed into serious fighting, and the “healthy rivalry” idea had to be abandoned.

#### BOWLING.

Bowling was a later development, and deserves more space than I can give to it. As an old curler I used to think it was a watered down form of curling, but of late years I have enjoyed many a delightful hour of a sum-

mer's evening watching the play—and the many manœuvres of the players. For it seems to me that nothing so much as bowling brings out their little peculiarities. To watch the exhibitions given by some of the early bowlers in Langholm was really an excellent entertainment, their method of delivery, their following up of the bowl, their frank delight at a good shot, and their equally frank chagrin at a bad one, the humour and the banter—were very amusing. By the time his bowl had reached the jack, old Thomas Veitch would be standing with his back to it anxiously watching it over his shoulder, whilst Willie Armstrong would be down on his knees at the jack even before the bowl got there. But yet, somehow, when I compare curling with bowling, I am reminded of Byron's contrast between "the dark Lochnagar" and "the fair landscapes, the gardens of roses"—and the former appealed more powerfully to me.

Cycling had not at this date come into our list of amusements. Later, however, we had the velocipede, a noisy, ramshackle, kind of thing, which older people regarded with dislike, though, indeed, "scorching" upon it was next to impossible. This form of recreation had no attraction for me. I fully sympathised with Lencie Armstrong when he declared that "it was never like the thing to see a middle-aged man rinnin' about the country on a gird."

#### DANCING.

Of indoor amusements we had many. Dancing was very popular. The dances were the old-fashioned coun-

try dances "nae cotillons brent new frae France," but jigs and reels and six-eights, and the like. Our dancing master was Willie Dick, who carried the Spade at the Common-Riding. Younger folk, who only remember



WILLIE DICK.

Willie in his older age, may think that in style and figure he did not suggest the professor of deportment, but in the early Forties the steps that Willie Dick could

not teach were hardly worth practising. Dancing never attracted me, but I remember one fore-supper when Willie dropped in to see my father about my learning the art. He was not making much headway until he explained to my father that he taught "manners," as well as dancing. Whether he had been critically observing mine, and held this out as a special inducement in my case only, I do not know, but the result was that I had to receive private lessons. So of an evening—it was during my apprenticeship—Willie would come along and I and he would retire into "the room," where he sought to train me in the way I ought to dance. I do not recall any express instruction he gave me in manners—possibly I was expected to make a note of his, and absorb them slowly into my daily habits. However, when I discovered that the younger members of the family were competing for turns at the keyhole I abandoned the lessons, much to my teacher's regret,—nay, it was more than regret, for he addressed to me some highly personal observations on the matter.

At the end of each season Willie held what we called an Assembly, in one of the town ballrooms. Of course, all the young folk were there, and although I had given up the lessons I was expected to go. Our parents went too, so that they could judge for themselves of our progress in dancing and manners, and we had light refreshments; and Willie, naturally enough, was extremely anxious that everything should go with the precision of clock-work. In one of the dances, however, a glaikit-looking lassie from the Meikleholm took one wrong turn, and in a minute the whole figure was in picturesque

confusion. Willie's indignation at having his exhibition spoiled in this way was perhaps natural. He did not politely hide his feelings, but delivered a forcible lecture to the lassie, referring to her as "a muckle awkward tawpie," and even hinted at "dadding her lugs," to the confusion of herself and the annoyance of her relations. Had the delinquent been a boy, he would have been called "a muckle cuckoo," which was Willie's superlative term of contempt, but he was always more gentle and polite to the lassies. We had a vague feeling that Willie's language scarcely bore out what the prospectus promised as to "mainners." Still, taking him all round, there were very few like Willie Dick.

An occasional means of amusement was given us by the appearance of the "mountebanks" on the Kilngreen. We did not apply the term to the medicine men alone, but to all who gave an out-door entertainment. Conjurers, circus men, and all the travelling brotherhood, were "mountebanks." Their entertainments were not considered quite the proper thing, and sedate householders did not go to the Kilngreen professedly to see or hear them, but would happen to be dandering up that way and stopped a moment or two to listen. When Robbie Clark was nominated for the eldership, one member entered a formal protest against his elevation, because Robbie was reported to have "been seen at the Kilngreen watching the mountebanks." The objection was not sustained, but we all felt that Robbie had had a narrow escape.

Time would fail me to tell of all we saw at the Kiln-

green—Delane on his Arab horses ; the man with the twenty-four waistcoats, of which he divested himself whilst careering round on a bare-backed steed ; the marvellous exhibitions, all warranted genuine and unrivalled ; the wild beast shows, which impressed us deeply, and kept us talking for about a fortnight afterwards. I recall a rather amusing incident which arose through the visit of a travelling menagerie to Carlisle. A rumour got abroad that a lioness had escaped and was roaming in the neighbourhood of Langholm. Strict watch was kept, and considerable tension arose. One night, as Wullie Thomson and his family were sitting “cracking” at the fireside, the conversation centred itself on this rumour. Wullie belonged to a family notorious for their high-strung and excitable temperaments. The talk had reached the stage of boasting what he or she would do should the animal appear, when, as if to provide an opportunity of testing their valour, a noise was heard in the “ben” end of the house, and at once it was concluded that the lioness had come. Immediately they rushed for the ladder leading to the loft, and all of them got safely up, when a council of war was held. Wullie said it had better be left to him to deal with the terrible position. He had recently been at a show on the Kilngreen, and had noted how the lion-tamer had controlled his charges, and so he was deemed most capable of handling the critical situation. Coming cautiously to the trap-door and still hearing the noise, Wullie assumed his most imperious tones and commanded : “Down, lioness ! LIE DOWN !” This order was repeated again and again, until a passer-by, hearing

it, looked in to see what Wullie was about. Then it came to light that the cause of the disturbance was a neighbour's big three-coloured cat\* which had got fastened into the room ! Wullie was teased about the incident for the remainder of his life.

\* That is, a tortoise-shell cat.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### MARRIAGE CUSTOMS.

I BELIEVE that our Scottish marriage laws and ceremonies have always been regarded as peculiar, but in Langholm seventy years ago, we were not aware that even a stranger could be either surprised or amused at any of our customs. We lived respectable and happy lives in blissful ignorance that we even might be interesting. On looking back, however, I see how vastly our marriage customs, like all the others, have altered. No doubt each locality has in this connection its own special characteristics, and those of Langholm may prove to be interesting to a new generation. I need not deal at any length with handfasting.\* This custom was not peculiar to Eskdale though the name of Handfasting Haugh, at the junction of the Black and White Esks, seems to suggest that here it obtained considerable popularity. Handfasting consisted of a mutual contract between a man and a woman to live together for one year. If things went well the bond was made absolute, if not, either party was at liberty to determine the contract, and special safeguards were provided to legitimise any issue there might be. This curious custom probably exerted an influence on the marriage laws of the Borders down to our own day, and perhaps the Gretna Green system was a development of it.

\* See *Langholm As It Was*, p. 92.

## COURTING.

For some reason which is rather difficult to discover, unless it lie in the objection we Scots folk have to effusiveness of affection, courtships were generally conducted in secret. It was not considered good form for a young couple to be seen much together, except, perhaps, on a Fair day or the like. They would greet each other in the street only by a smile or a nod, if indeed, they "let on" that they knew each other at all. In the home the fact of the courtship would probably be ignored, except, perhaps, by the younger members of the family, who discovered in it an excellent chance for chaffing the bashful lover. This affected indifference continued almost up to the day when the names were "given in." It would be fairly well understood in the town that such an event was not unlikely, but I have known cases where the public intimation of the coming marriage was the first indication that even friends had of the courtship.

## GIVING IN THE NAMES.

Once the proceedings had come to this point, however, the subsequent stages were made occasions of festivity and jollity, and of general conversation. It was a common practice for the names to be "given in" in a public house, and it was necessary for the clerk of the kirk session to attend. This important official was nearly always the parish schoolmaster, and I do not remember that, elder though he usually was, he raised any serious objection either to being present at these interesting little functions, or to drinking to the future happiness of the young people.

The first “crying”\* of the banns took place on the following Sunday, and it immediately became one of the main topics of conversation among the womenfolk of the town, and herein I notice but little change after the lapse of seventy long years.

“BIDDING.”

After the “crying” came the “bidding,” when the shy young groom, accompanied by his equally shy best man, had to go round inviting his relatives and friends to the marriage, for the invitations were not then given by little printed cards. On reflection, I am of opinion that this was an ordeal somewhat more disconcerting than even the wedding ceremony itself. The couple would come awkwardly into the house, where they had been nervously expected for some time, and would be furnished with seats near the fire. It was good manners to pretend that the object of their call was quite unsuspected, and the simple little fraud was kept up until the couple rose to take their leave. It was probably whilst his hand was on the sneck that the prospective bridegroom would make a sudden dash at the object of his visit, which during the interview had been uppermost in every mind, excepting in that of the gudeman who, when the conversation seemed to be heading straight to the point, had a perfect genius for diverting the talk into another channel. The invitation was not a formal one, and it was good manners to express great

\* Readers who are not of Langholm birth will doubtless notice that we generally used the word “cry” instead of “proclaim” or “publish.” We “cried” the Fair and we “cried” the banns.

surprise at receiving it. Sandie Thomson, who was always an awkward man, instead of giving a definite "bid," said "he supposed they would be comin' to this turn-owre." But that was recognised as a clumsy way of doing the business. The "bidding" was always done before the Friday following the "crying." An invitation received after that day was "a fiddler's bid." It will excite no surprise when I add that the bidding was followed by considerable heart-burning, many who expected a bid being left out, and others included who "never thocht o' sic a thing." But there was still a chance, for the fiddler could exercise his ancient prerogative of bidding, and his invitations, though not favourably regarded by the women-folk, were deemed, especially by the young men, as better than no bid at all.

#### A SINGULAR CUSTOM.

The popular wedding day in Langholm, then as now, was Friday. On the preceding Thursday there was observed one of our most curious and unexplainable customs—the washing of the bride's feet. A very select and favoured circle of women-foik assembled for this observance, which long ago fell into disuse. Into the wash-basin were put a ring, a piece of money, and perhaps a thimble, and these were groped for by the unmarried girls, who, by their success or failure in obtaining one or other of the articles, could judge of their own matrimonial chances.

#### THE WEDDING DAY.

The wedding day was one of excitement, both in the

homes of those mainly concerned, and to some extent throughout the neighbourhood. Six o'clock was the usual hour for the marriage service, which took place in the house of the bride. Of late years this practice has been modified by marriages being celebrated in the church or in some hotel.

The smart young men among the guests were told off to bring in the ladies. Those invited by the bride were thus escorted to her home, and those by the bridegroom to his. At each arrival there was much cheering, laughing, and "hooching," and often not a little banter of some gallant youth who was, probably that day for the first time, rigged out in a tall hat. And I might here say that for weddings, even more than for funerals, all the family "tiles" were brought into requisition. Ancient bandboxes were brought down from the tops of presses and box-beds, and their contents furbished up for the occasion. A wedding in Langholm was interesting if only for the study it offered in masculine head-gear. Not infrequently the fact of a "tile" having been borrowed was well known to the spectators, and jocular allusions to the fact would be made by the irrepressible youths gathered around the door. The lassies were, of course, dressed all in white, and, before the arrival of her escort, each would have undergone a critical inspection by a company of neighbours, whose entry, on such an occasion as a wedding or a ball, was privileged. The staidier women-folk donned their black silks, and for dazzling grandeur it would be difficult to beat a Langholm wedding of fifty or sixty years ago!

The bringing in of each couple was witnessed by an

excited crowd of youngsters, to whom a wedding was a social and financial event of first-class importance, especially if it took place near Fair time, as was often the case. Some difficulty was usually experienced by the guests in reaching the door through the crowd, and occasionally their dresses came off second best in the struggle.

TOMMY.

Close by the door-cheek stood Tommy, who for the sake of the refreshment he was afterwards to receive, meekly and patiently endured the "chairging" of the boys, in the intervals between the arrivals. No wedding was complete without Tommy's presence and sympathy, —indeed, there was a vague sort of feeling, unexpressed and latent, that the event was just barely legal if Tommy was not there. I say he meekly endured the taunts of the boys, but now and again the whole atmosphere about the door became stormy and electrical. This happened when someone, seemingly in simple boyish innocence, but, of course, imitating one of Tommy's characteristic actions would appear to be dusting his knickerbockers with his jacket sleeve, or wetting his fingers to remove tiny specks from his clogs, — which of course were thickly covered with "glaur." Then Tommy's righteous indignation was stirred to its very depths, and blazed forth in impotent rage. Threats of breaking the windows, of breaking the lamps, and such like, would lead to another —that he would "dab hissel' into the water;" but these were never seriously meant. Poor Tommy! Mr. Smellie once asked him if what he had heard was true —that he



TOMMY.

had been seen working. Tommy indignantly denied it. He regarded the report as a malicious slander !

#### THE PROCESSION.

But to return to the wedding. When the bride's guests were all assembled they formed a procession and went forth, without the bride, of course, to convoy the bridegroom's party to her house, a practice which I

have often thought must have been similar to the Jewish custom indicated in the parable of the Ten Virgins. Headed by the bridegroom, the whole company then returned to the bride's house—a long procession accompanied by all the bairns in the neighbourhood demanding “Ba' siller.”\* This was showered *en route* in pennies and halfpennies, on rare occasions mixed with small silver, but the principal distribution was made at the door, immediately after the marriage ceremony. A collection was taken from the guests, part going to pay the fiddler and part to provide “ba' siller.” The money was scattered by the best man, and when no chance of finding another coin was left, the crowd of bairns slowly dispersed, leaving Tommy to keep watch at the door for another hour or so, for then was Tommy's harvest time.

#### “THE HERD FROM TE'IOT-HEID.”

In glancing back I see now that a great share of the enjoyment on these occasions arose from sheer noisiness, especially if our cousins from the country were present. I recall one wedding which created in Langholm what I can only describe as a sensation. One of the most conspicuous guests was “a muckle fallow frae Te'iot-heid,” as Lencie Armstrong styled him. He arrived early in the afternoon, accompanied by a terribly cantankerous dog, and immediately the whole town seemed to be

\* This was “ball-money”—an exaction at one time demanded in Northumberland and the south of Scotland from every newly-married couple, to prevent them being molested. The money was designed for the purchase of a football, but afterwards it was kept by whoever was successful in the scramble.



aware of their presence. He was dressed in tartan trousers and a check jacket of outrageous pattern. On going to the inn he changed his boots, which bore very aggressive-looking "neb-plates," for a pair of carpet slippers. In these he took part in the wedding procession. His governing idea was that we Langholm folk took our joys too seriously, and to do him justice, he did his best to remedy the defect. As the procession moved up the Front Street he came to a halt every few minutes, and then with a wild yell made a spring into the air, much to the discomfiture of the lady he was escorting, and to the confusion of the procession which was brought to a halt at every leap. The dog trotted near him, but each time he did this it sat down on its haunches and howled piteously as well it might. That one man made that evening memorable. There was never such a night experienced in Langholm. The wedding was in one of the cottages—and when some thirty couples were crammed into one of those small houses the confusion was, naturally, somewhat bewildering. Our hero danced in his carpet slippers, and he sat out not a single dance. His favourite trick when dancing was to jump up and bump his head against the ceiling—and then yell! We discussed that wedding for several weeks, and always the herd from Te'iot-heid was the focus to which all our memories turned.

Few presents were then given, and such as were made were useful rather than ornamental. There were no silver cigarette cases nor dainty vases, but instead blankets, frying pans, fenders, and salt buckets. I

remember one bride who was going to live in a cottage of two rooms, receiving no fewer than seven frying pans! Instead of presents friends would give a tea party—which both in the way of provision and enjoyment almost rivalled the wedding itself.

Another ordeal, very trying to the shy bridegroom, was “the kirking.” It was the correct thing for the bride and bridegroom and for the “best man” and “best maid” who accompanied them, to “link” to and from the kirk, though at other times it would have been regarded as of doubtful taste. This spic and span procession, - the young and happy swain in his tile hat, and the blushing bride resplendent in her black silk, Paisley shawl, and gay bonnet, was eagerly watched for by all the women-folk of the gate-end who peeped from behind the curtains until the “weddingers” were past, and then threw off all restraint and came boldly to the door and watched as far as the bridal party could be seen. At the kirk door, the beadle was waiting to escort them to the seats, which, in consideration of a tip from the best man, he had graciously reserved.

#### QUAINT DIVORCE CUSTOM.

Whilst writing of marriage customs I might mention a feature of which one never hears to-day, but which in my youth was held to be a legal process, though that it was really so, I am doubtful. It related not to the uniting but to the disjoining process, and may have been a survival of the old hand-fasting custom of Eskdale. It was held that if a woman left her husband's house and refused to return, he might set a plate for her

at dinner time, then go outside and, calling her by name, summon her to the meal, and if this were continued for a year and a day and she still proved obdurate, then he was legally free. I knew of a man who was said to have adopted this curious method of divorce, and tradition had it that after summoning her to come to dinner he ran hastily into the house and bolted the door.

## PETE'S WAY.

A simpler way of divorce, worthier of America than Scotland, was that adopted by Pete Scott. Pete had not thought it necessary to go through the conventional marriage ceremony, but instead had come to a purely financial arrangement with the lady of his choice, by which they simply amalgamated their estates. Pete gave the history of the experiment in his own way: "Kate and me did gey weel for about three weeks," he said, "but then she began to show some of her cant-raips. And so says I to her ane morning at breakfast time, says I, 'Kate, I can see perfectly weel that ye're ettlin' to begin yer capers. By the way ye're shapin' enow A' can see that you and me's no gaun to jump thegither. Now as ye're vera weel aware, Kate, ye'd only eighteenpence when we came thegither: here's yer money doon on the table, and be oot o' the house by dinner time.'"

"Did she gaun, Pete?" some one asked.

"No, she didna gaun," admitted Pete, "but she was a very different woman ever efter."

Not a few couples were then living in the district con-

cerning the strict legality of whose marriages there was more than a doubt. To rectify the scandal and for the sake of the children, Mr. Shaw, the parish minister, undertook a kind of missionary tour through the town, and, where he thought it necessary, performed the marriage service in due order. I remember his going to one house where the man and woman had lived together many years, without troubling themselves very much on the question of legality. When Mr. Shaw went in, the gude-man was up in the loft doing a few repairs to the roof. The woman at once guessed what was the object of the minister's visit, and going into the "entry," she shouted up, "Jock, here's the minister—come down at yince and get mairrit."

There was one feature of Border life, shared in by the Langholm of a by-gone day which I must not omit to mention. I mean the custom of Gretna-Green marriages. Of course, this famous resort of love-sick couples was taken advantage of by people from all over the country, and the elopement to Gretna has been immortalized both in art and literature. Such marriages were perfectly legal according to the Scots law, but in Langholm they were not favoured, especially of late years. Gretna was often resorted to on grounds of economy. It was cheaper to hire a wagonette than to entertain 70 or 80 people to a sumptuous tea, with "speerits" to follow. But about the Common-Riding time and on Hiring Days, many a romantic elopement occurred. Indeed, business was so brisk in the Fair week that a kind of branch office for the performance of the marriage ceremony was established in a tent on the Kilngreen, but of

this I shall write later. Frequently we had some very amusing incidents. I remember one very wet day when the masons of the town could not work, and some of the young fellows felt the time hang heavy, one of them remarked that a trip to Gretna Green would relieve the monotony. This was soon arranged. But unfortunately the friends of the bride did not approve of the match, and took the precaution of locking her in her room. This was going to mean the spoiling of the fun for the masons, so they coolly proposed to the disappointed swain that as the "machine" was engaged they would have to go to Gretna, and the difficulty about the lady could be overcome by his marrying the bridesmaid. He assented, and so did she, and off they set. However, word of this scheme was carried to the first lady who, being rendered desperate, made her escape and pursued the bridal party, and overtook them too. A re-arrangement was soon effected, and like all other romances this one ended happily. Naturally, it created no small sensation in Langholm.

#### PENNY WEDDINGS.

There was one custom which the Kirk authorities strongly discouraged, the holding of "penny weddings." The phrase does not, as many think, imply that the charge was only a penny. Sometimes it was sixpence, and I have known occasions when the business-like bride charged a shilling—and did pretty well financially out of the event! The payment, however, did not include spirits—"exclusive of wines" it was.

A collection was always taken at a "penny wedding"

on behalf of the beadle—to propitiate that important functionary into providing seats in the kirk the following Sunday for the wedding party.

But many excesses were indulged in on these occasions, and, at length, the kirk session made the holding of one an offence liable to their discipline, and the practice slowly fell into disuse.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ODD FOLK AND ODD EVENTS.

I HAVE already referred to some of the quaint characters we had in Langholm seventy years ago. But it is quite impossible for me to give more than a feeble portraiture of them. We had a very large number of men and women who were well known for their peculiarities, —eccentric people whose oddities had every chance of flourishing in our little, isolated town. And there were others with “kinks” in their tempers or their natures who afforded us great amusement, and created a kind of humorous atmosphere in which we lived and moved and had our being. Many of the incidents associated with these “characters,” their odd actions and sayings—are untranslatable into book-English, though to us, who were familiar with the whole circumstances, the finer shades of humour were at once apparent.

#### STORIES OF TOM CAIRNS.

But I can paint here only the stronger colours. It is impossible, for instance, for me to convey a sense of the atmosphere which Tom Cairns created. You had to know Tom, see his clothes, hear his voice, and be familiar with his life-story, to appreciate fully his peculiar place in the life of Langholm. He was one of our choicest specimens, and fresh stories were always

being told of his sayings and doings. He was accustomed to wander, oftenest by night, all over the town, away in country places, and over the hills. In the mornings the window-shutters of the town would be found chalked up with quotations from *The Spectator*, of which he was an eager reader, or with verses from the Bible—especially from the Book of Proverbs, with which he had a remarkable familiarity. He was ever ready in retort, and some of his cleverest replies were given in Scriptural language. Though a “natural,” Tom had quite a remarkable intelligence; and also a most sensitive conscience. He would sometimes retrace his steps for miles in order to dot an “i” or stroke a “t.” He used to attend church sometimes, and it was said that he once put four pheasant eggs into the collection plate with the remark, “Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee.” There was one Mary, who kept a small shop, who could make Tom do anything she wished. Tom had fallen rather in love with Mary, and I recollect seeing him standing in the street opposite her house, and he was crying: “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.” Brown, the Duke of Buccleuch’s gardener, charged Tom with “raxing” over the walls of the nursery and taking apples off the wall trees. He said: “Tam, what makes ye take my apples?” He put the question once or twice, and Tom’s reply was, when it came, “because they are nearer than the Milnholm yins,”—a reply which had the double merit of being truthful and smart.

The foundation of Tom’s eccentricity was a disap-



at the time. She used to attend the Church, sometimes and it was said that he once put four Pheasant's Eggs into the Collection plate with the remark "Silver and Gold have done me but such as I have give I sent to thee." There was one Mary, who kept a small shop, who could make Sam do anything she wished. Sam had fallen rather in love with Mary, and I recollect seeing him standing in the street opposite her house and he was saying: "Stay me with flags and comfort me with apples for I am sick of love." Baron, the Duke of Buccleuch's Gardener charged Sam with passing over the wall at the Nursery and taking apples off the Malines. He said "I am

pointment in love, the heartless damsel being the Mary already mentioned. This coloured, or perhaps I ought to say clouded all his life. Often we heard him, in daylight and dark, weirdly calling Mary's name to the winds, as he went on his lonely way. We laughed at Tom, yet how much pathos there was behind all the amusement! It was certainly embarrassing for Mary to find her name some morning chalked on almost every window-shutter in a street, but she was very patient through it all. Poor Tom conceived the fear that his love for Mary was a violation of the Scriptural commands, which he always interpreted very literally. The Biblical precept says, "If thine eye offend thee pluck it out." Tom did not quite do this but almost so—he ran into it a darning needle, destroying the sight completely, and thereby adding to the effect of his eccentricities. And in obedience to the same command he severely injured a finger, because he thought his right hand was an offence unto him—probably he was thinking of the Milnholm apples. At one period of his life he became possessed with the belief that he was called upon to do one of three actions—he must undertake a journey to Douglas, or throw a boy over Langholm Bridge, or go through the kirk on the hillside naked. The last he actually carried out. I happened to be in the kirk that day and witnessed the sensation, and heard the minister, Mr. Shaw's quiet order, "Will someone attend to that poor, forlorn creature?"

One of the ministers in the Presbytery who was supposed to have received a considerable fortune with his wife, came one day to preach at the Town-head kirk,

and Tom came to hear him. The minister preached an excellent sermon from the text "For riches take unto themselves wings and flee away as an eagle towards heaven," and Tom, it was noticed, was listening eagerly. Next day he met the minister strolling through the town and halted for a "crack."

"Well Tom," said the minister, "I saw you in the kirk yesterday, what was your opinion o' the sermon?"

"Mun A' tell ye my opinion o' the sermon, Maister ——?" queried Tom in some hesitation.

"Yes, certainly," replied the preacher. "I would really like to have it."

"Well, then," said Tom, "A' juist thocht that ye kent gey weel where Miss Blank's riches would fly when ye mairrit her!"

Tom was a privileged person, of course, and the minister was wont in after years to tell the story with much enjoyment.

At length poor Tom had to be removed to the asylum at Dumfries, but even in such surroundings his ready wit did not desert him. He was visited once by a man he had known well in Langholm, who asked him how he liked to live there. His reply was, "I would that you were altogether such as I am—except these bonds." One day he escaped, and got as far as Lockerbie on his way to Langholm, when his sensitive conscience smote him, suggesting that it was wrong to bring away the clothes, as they did not belong to him. He retraced his steps, went into the asylum again, and, I believe, died there.

## “NAPOLEON!”

There was not the same care taken in those days of persons of weak intellect, and not a few roamed about the streets of Langholm who would now be placed under supervision. I remember one man who lived in a little house of one room, becoming possessed with the idea that he was the Emperor Napoleon. I have seen him haughtily swaggering about the town declaring that he would yet make England tremble!

## CHAIRLIE HOGG.

Of quite another type was Chairlie Hogg, one of the queerest little bodies that Langholm ever knew. The only way to classify Chairlie is to say in our cautious Scots way that “he wasna a’ theer.” His occupation was equally difficult of definition. He went from door to door selling trifles from a box hung round his neck – the identical box of the accompanying illustration. On the lid in brass nails were the letters “C. H.” Inside was an assortment of small wares,—tape, thread, boot-laces (“whaings,” we called them), and a little bit of everything else a pedlar was expected to carry. I do not remember that Chairlie did much business— in fact he had not time for business. His time was mostly used up in skirmishes with the boys, which, we always thought, he invited. One of his set jobs was to bring coals to Mary Chisholm. “And who was Mary Chisholm?” do my readers ask? Mary kept a little shop at Moodlawpoint and sold “skinnies,”\* and bread and

\* Bread rolls.

sweeties.—her “roond black balls” being specially famous—so famous that the children sang about them in one of their play-rhymes. But Mary rose to her highest pinnacle of greatness in her selection of valentines. It was here that her genius displayed itself. Any lone woman could sell “skinnies,” but to deal successfully in valentines, to gauge unerringly, as Mary did for a generation, the demands of the amorous youths and maidens of the neighbourhood, required the eye of an artist and the discrimination of an expert. Even we staidier folk felt a sympathetic thrill when it became known that Mary’s valentines were on view. Mary Chisholm! what memories the name awakens! I believe I could even yet pick out Mary’s shopping basket from a score of its fellows, and for many a long year in the Town-head kirk I had an uninterrupted view of her Sunday bonnet, which changed not from season to season nor from year to year.

Chairlie got the coals at Mary Jardine’s, who had a little coal business near the Dam Brig. And here I may remark that I do not think Mary’s steel-yard would have quite satisfied the requirements of a County Council inspector—but that official had not then been invented, and we got on fairly well without him! I remember even now Chairlie Hogg’s barrow. It had been repaired so often that long ago all trace of the original barrow had entirely disappeared. If Chairlie saw the boys anywhere near he stopped “hurling” at once, and sat expectantly awaiting their attack. To them he was better sport than cricket, football, or guddling. They generally opened the game by remarking to Chairlie in a casual sort of way that he was dying. From this they passed

to more personal remarks, calling him a "birsie body." This had much the same effect on him as Dan O'Connell's taunt that she was a parallelogram had on Biddy, the



CHAIRLIE HOGG.

Irish applewoman. The atmosphere at once became electric, stones hurtled through the air, and the boys sought cover behind doors, jousting out to renew the charge, until at last Chairlie worked himself into a

“swithering” in the square,—which was precisely what they had hoped for. This “swithering” was one of his most characteristic actions, and we noticed that he often managed to have an attack just as the school was being dismissed. If Chairlie had confined his “swithering” to the public highway no one would have objected, but a favourite place for an attack was the Town-head kirk, whilst the service was in progress. What precisely it was in the service there that brought on these outbreaks I could never make out, but his entering the kirk seemed to provoke one. At last the office-bearers gave him to understand that if he felt impelled to swither he must go outside, and not disturb the congregation. So it came to pass that when he felt an attack—perhaps it was more a desire—impending, Chairlie would scramble out from the top of the pew, making a tremendous clatter with his big clogs, and go out to the kirk steps and there swither with an outrageous commotion. The session might as well have let him remain (except for its rousing the dogs), for he always left the door open, and we could hear him dancing and shouting on the top step, just as plainly as if he had swithered in the kirk. Next to his personation of the devil, “swithering” was his distinguishing performance. There were two outstanding traits in Chairlie’s disposition of which, when they wished to tease him, the whole community took advantage. One was his dread of death, which gave the point to the warning of the boys, and the other was his notorious gluttony. He could never be brought to speak of death—he called it “the grim messenger,” and dying was “crossing the Jordan.” It was very quaint to hear him

introduce these phrases, — one could almost read the morbid dread in his voice as well as in his eyes. His powers of eating were enormous. He lived under the care of a relative named Marjorie, and one day she had prepared for the family dinner a haggis, which usually served for two days, and had left it on the table to cool. She was absent but a short time, and on her return Chairlie looked up with a sheepish glance, and apparently in all innocence asked, “Dis yin eat the skin an’ a’, Marjorie?” He was frequently at Mr. Dobie’s manse, where he received many a good meal. One day a terrible thunderstorm broke whilst the family were at dinner, and most of the courses came back to the kitchen almost untouched. Chairlie said nothing, but seeing his chance, ate steadily, until, having finished a whole rice pudding, he glanced upward and slowly remarked, “There’s been a considerable dust i’ the heevens !”

There came a day when the good Marjorie fell ill, and was sick even unto death. Hearing the neighbours doubt if she would recover, Chairlie betook himself to the sick chamber and sat down. Like Job’s three friends he spake no word unto her for a long time, but at last he opened his mouth and said, in his slow, high-pitched, nasal manner, “Mar-jorie! they tell me that ye’ll be crossing the Jordan sune,——sae maybe ye’d better be payin’ that half-sovereign ye borrowed.” And when at last Marjorie had really crossed the river and Chairlie was informed of the sad event, he restrained his grief and repaired straightway to the pitcher where Marjorie had kept her household bread. Lifting the lid and holding it aside as he looked into the empty vessel, he



drily remarked, "Aye——! She's ta'en guid care to eat a' the flourocks\* afore she crossed the Jordan!" At length the day came when the feet of Chairlie himself came down to the river's brink and he stood by the swellings of the Jordan he had so long feared to cross. Then, like most other sick folk in Langholm, he sent for Mr. Smellie. But it was not that he might be reassured or prepared for the voyage to the untravelled land—he desired, he said, to set his house in order. He therefore asked Mr. Smellie to draw up his last will and testament. It was a characteristic document, but now I recall only one "bequest." "I, Charles Hogg," he said, "leave and bequeath to the folk at the Ha'Crofts *two pound and a half of my remains*, for the day A' was born A' little thocht they wad be sae kind to me." And when Mr. Smellie told me the story he remarked in his own inimitable way: "Aye—— A' think that wud be juist aboot the wecht o' yin o' Chairlie's feet!"

Soon afterwards Chairlie Hogg was gathered to his fathers in Wauchope kirkyard, and, with his auld-farrant figure absent from our streets, Langholm life became a little less interesting.

#### JENNIE'S "MARRIAGE."

Down in one of the side streets in the Old-town there lived two unmarried sisters, Jennie and Betty, both of them well advanced in years, but yet cherishing a hope of marriage. They thought that it would be a suitable match if Jennie were to marry a friend of

\* Flourocks were scones made of flour—a delicacy very popular in those days of pease and barley bread.

mine in Langholm, who had acted for them, as for many others, as confidential adviser. Not doubting that they had but to settle matters between them, and when all was fixed up, let the prospective bridegroom know of his happiness, they made all arrangements for the wedding. They then decided, very properly I think under the circumstances, that Betty should go and consult the happy man, and the following conversation occurred :—

*Betty* : “ I’ve juist come up to arrange aboot the wedding : we think Monday would be a guid day, what div ye think ? ”

*Robbie* : “ Oh, aye, A’ think Monday wad juist be as guid as ony other.”

*Betty* : “ Weel, then, that’s settled—we thocht we’d better arrange things. Six o’clock’ll do, I suppose ? ”

*Robbie* : “ I see nae objection to six ; but, Betty, ye haena said yet whae’s wedding it is ! ”

*Betty* : “ Oh, its Jennie’s, of course.”

*Robbie* : “ Oh, aye, I see, I see,—and may A’ enquire whae Jennie’s gaun to marry ? ”

*Betty* : “ Oh, aye, ye may enquire—its yersel ! ”

*Robbie* : “ Oh, its me ? Oh, aye, umpha !——But, Betty, dae ye no think that Jennie nicht hae tell’t me aboot this afore ? ”

#### JENNIE’S “ DEATH.”

My friend had another rather curious adventure with Jennie. Betty went the way of all flesh, and, being left alone, Jennie’s peculiarities increased with her isolation. One day a message was brought by some neighbours to

the nephew of the old lady that they feared something was wrong with his aunt — she had not been seen all the week-end, and they could get no reply to their knocking. In some alarm the young man went for my friend, who accompanied him to the house. They found the report all too true. No answer came to their calling or knocking, so a joiner was got to break open the door; and there on the bed lay poor Jennie, calm and silent. They looked at her sadly for a few moments, and then some of the neighbours began to greet, and one of them remarked that she “had never seen Jennie sae like hersel’,” and another said, “what a bonnie corp she made!” The nephew took charge of things and got the neighbours to go with him into the room to light a fire and see to the arrangements generally. My friend was therefore left alone in the quiet death chamber. He had known Jennie very intimately, and understood better than anyone else all her queer ways. So he rather doubted the reality of Jennie’s decease, thinking that at least it “had been greatly exaggerated.” Drawing a chair to the bedside he sat down and whispered, “Jennie, when did this sad affair happen?” “Saturday morning,” at once answered the corpse! My friend said no more, but slipped into the room and in his pawky way said, “Ay — A’ think A’ wadna gaun ony farer wi’ the arrangements,—Jennie seems mair like hersel’ again.”

Writing of Jennie’s “marriage” reminds me that we had not a few of such love affairs in our town. There was an old body, one Ebie Irving, who, being too frail to work, might have been seen sitting idly at the door of his house of a summer’s day. He lived under the

care of his sister, who, noticing one day that he was not quite in his usual spirits, made enquiry as to the cause. "Oh," he pathetically explained, "A's in love." "Oh, that's it, is it?" she sharply answered, "A'll sune cure ye o' that,—ye'll tak a guid dose o' salts the nicht."

The following story, which I often heard my father tell, ought possibly to have been given in the previous chapter, but I have changed its place lest it should be taken to indicate a "custom" among us Eskdale folk!

A woman in Canonby got it into her head that her husband's feelings towards her had changed. She finessed and schemed to get the man to reassure her, but being only a stupid, unemotional kind of body, he did not suspect his wife's game. So she in despair resorted to a desperate expedient. She feigned a grievous sickness, and began to hint to her stupid husband that she doubted it was unto death. But still he did not draw. At last she brought matters to a direct issue. One night, when he came in from the smiddy, he was at once called to the bedside of his dying wife. She had one request to make, she said, ere she went hence—would he grant her a dying wish?

"What is't?" he asked rather bluntly, but with no intentional unkindness.

"Weel," she said, "A' think A' could die in peace if A' was sure that ye wad never bring anither woman into the house to domineer owre my puir mitherless bairns. Wull ye promise me this, John?"

"Dod," said John, "A' dinna ken aboot that. A' was juist thinkin' i' the smiddy the day that as ye seemed grey unweel A'd better be lookin' oot for anither—for A'

canna dae weel withoot a wife, and A' thocht that Nell o' the Tail would make a real guid yin."

"Nell o' the Tail!" screamed the dying woman, "Nell o' the Tail set owre *my* bairns. My certy, but A'll let baith you and Nell o' the Tail see—there's nae Nell o' the Tail coming here. Nell o' the Tail!!!" She was up that same night—"just on wi' the clogs again," as Johnie Weave used to express it.

"POETS."

As I sit, these long winter evenings, reflecting on the occurrences of far-off days, there have flitted before my eyes the names of men of letters closely associated with Eskdale, of whom we are all proud—men like David Irving, John Maxwell, and others I might name. But there have also come before me names which even yet make one smile,—men and women of great literary ambition, whose gifts were scarcely equal to their own opinion of them. Not a little of the eccentricity of Langholm expressed itself in poetry—and I see from the magazines that this outlet is still utilised throughout the land. We had a considerable number among us who reckoned themselves poets, and no little merriment was aroused by their efforts. We styled them poets of the "Susie Hawkins" order. I can give only a few specimens here.

DINGLETON.

Wattie Dingleton said, and with perfect sincerity, that if only he could remember in the morning the verses he composed during the silent watches of the night, "folk wad sune gie owre talkin' aboot Burns." The most

splendid ideas, he said, came to him, but when the morning broke they had gone an experience that perhaps is not wholly confined to Wattie Dingleton. One of these local poets went the length of publishing his works. He took the manuscript to a local printer, who examined it very carefully, and then coldly remarked that if he was to print this he must have the money in advance. He saw that the poet was disappointed, and added that if the author wished it printed of course he would do the job, but it must be distinctly understood that he ran no risk over the publication. Despite these discouraging observations, the author decided to print, and very considerably said to the printer that if he saw anything that he thought could be improved, he was at liberty to alter it. To this the unsympathetic printer drily answered, that he would have to begin at the first line and end at the last. The book was duly issued, however, and at one time I had a copy of it in my possession, but it has disappeared, lent, possibly, to some of my "book-keeping" friends, or perhaps swallowed up in the conflagration of spring cleaning. I have before me now a poem which the author composed on himself. I quote one verse only ; it is typical of the whole :—

"ON THE AUTHOR : WALTER SCOTT DINGLETON."

"Of Scott I came, and Scott I am,  
In Scotland I remain,  
And greatly am attached to Scott,  
As Scott is my surname."

When I say that this is not in MS. but actually in print, one can understand, perhaps, how it was that the printer refused to take any risks

MY FRIEND'S POEM.

There was another aspirant to literary fame who came one day to obtain my opinion of some verses he had written. The poem began in this way :—

“ A padoked hair craw  
Looked out o' its nest to see what it saw,  
The tree it was high and the craw it grew dizzy,  
Doon fell the craw and broke the head off a daisy.”

He was an intimate acquaintance, and I thought he would want my candid opinion. So I remarked that though I recognised the pathos of the incident, was doubtful about the metre ; and not wishing to hurt the poet's feelings, I ventured the non-committal opinion that I thought it was a pity about the daisy. I fear the criticism was not to his liking, for never again did he mention the subject of poetry to me.

DAVIE BEATTIE.

There was a small book of verse published by one David Beattie, and I still greatly prize my copy of it. It contains a very long poem on the various occupations followed by the people of Langholm — a singular theme for a poem, and the author's treatment of it was equally singular. I need only give one verse :—

“ The weaving it goes briskly on  
By virtue of the shuttle,  
And they, like other gentlemen,  
Do freely take the bottle.”

—a sentiment which I have no doubt was perfectly true, but one which might have been expressed with a greater regard for the feelings of the weavers.

WILLIAM WILSON.

I have before me another book of rhymes printed in Edinburgh in 1800. It is dated from Langholm by one William Wilson, who seems to have been a miner. The book appears to have been issued in a kind of tantrum, and one wonders what demand there could have been for its publication. Here is a specimen verse :—

“ To die I'm e'en right fair aghast,  
 Ilk pang I'm fear'd will be the last,  
 An' Jenny, ye maun follow fast  
                                   Or it be lang ;  
 Sae mind your auld mistaks in haste  
                                   As weel's ye can.”

Who Wilson was I confess I do not know, probably he only settled down in Langholm after working in the coal pits, but his mind seems to have been set somewhat bitterly on the fact of our mortality, as most of the poems are dying words of somebody or other. One of my reasons for mentioning the publication now is because it contains the “ Prologue to a Charity Play, acted by some of the Inhabitants of Langholm.” The Prologue was spoken by Mr. Graham, who had “ for several years been the brightest ornament of the Langholm Theatre, and whose performance of Bauldy in *The Gentle Shepherd*, of McClaymore in *The Reprisal*, and of Vizzard in *The Vintner in the Suds*, will long be remembered by those who had the pleasure of witnessing it.” The author admits having included the Prologue in the volume, “ in order to increase the bulk of this collection.” He apparently anticipated a hostile reception of the book, for on the title page he prints the following couplet from Falconer :—



“O ! let not censure, with malignant joy  
The harvest of this humble hope destroy !”

And so, perhaps, it is more charitable to forbear further criticism.

These various efforts added considerably to the gaiety of Langholm life, and I mention them here because they excited so much amusement among us.

#### GEORDIE'S RIDE.

I might include also the tale of an odd event which served us all for conversation, partly mirthful, partly indignant, for a good while. This was Geordie Hogg's ride from Westerhall to the Kennels at Falford. It happened in this manner : The late baronet of Westerhall sent for Geordie on the plea of seeing about some work at Falford. To Geordie's consternation, Sir Fred told him to mount one of his blood horses whilst he took the other. Geordie vainly protested that he could not ride, but Sir Fred would listen to no excuse,—“your horse,” he said, “will easily follow mine.” And it did. Sir Fred gave rein to his steed, which set off at a furious pace with Geordie's in hot pursuit. Geordie soon lost both reins and stirrups, and could only hold on by the mane. By the time they got into Langholm his trousers had worked up above his knees, and his eyes were set in sheer fright. So furious was the pace that he afterwards declared he never saw the Langholm ! Crowds of people rushed to witness the scene, and soon the whole town was seething with excitement. Sir Fred never drew rein until he was far up Wauchope, when poor Geordie got his release. Needless to say he did

no more joiner work for many a day, but Sir Fred amply compensated him for the rough and risky practical joke.

I well remember the day, some years later, when Sir Fred's own horse appeared riderless at Wauchope toll-bar, and search being made, his body was found on the roadside opposite Bloughburnfoot, where to this day a small heap of stones, now almost lost in the base of the wall, marks the spot where he fell.

Some suppose that this tragic event occurred at Besse Bell's Brae, and is marked by the cairn of stones there. This was where a son of William Young, the carter, was found killed, some years later than Sir Fred's death.

## CHAPTER X.

### SUPERSTITIONS.

WHILST writing the foregoing pages I have sometimes feared that I was portraying our life in Langholm in colours somewhat too light. If I have singled out the more humorous or superficial phases of our daily existence, there has nevertheless been present in my mind other features which do not come under either of these descriptions. For our life had also a serious, and sometimes, indeed, a solemn aspect, without reference to which my drawing of Langholm seventy years ago would be wholly out of perspective. We had days and nights when there was little laughter in the town, but when rather the pathos and tragedy of existence occupied the screen. But I think I can say this, that even in the direst times we were able to see a silver lining, which perhaps was not so much a promise of better days, as that saving grace of thankfulness and that sense of humour which sometimes brighten even the darkest event.

There were times of scarcity when food could hardly be got ; days when work could not be had ; times when sickness came to us, and death seemed to stalk abroad through the town ; there were disasters and calamities which brought dismay to many a home, and made winsome women careworn and prematurely old ; times of much anxiety and quiet in our homes ; times even of a

strange morbidness which occasionally made Langholm an eerie place to live in, especially in the drear autumn time, and no representation of our life would be complete without such seasons being remembered as a background to our lighter memories.

There was also a certain darkening of the colours produced by the old superstitions which existed among us. The belief in witchcraft lingered well into my own day. Indeed, even in the present generation, though discrediting witchcraft, most of the people continued to attribute to certain old women powers of divination and "second-sight." In Eskdale, as in other parts in past times, witchcraft wielded a potent influence over the lives of the people. Chambers's *Gazetteer* tells how the witches of Eskdale had certain magic powers, which delicacy forbids my mentioning here, but these were probably attributed to witches everywhere. It also mentions as peculiar to our dale an instrument called "the branks," for the restraint of scolding wives, but neither "the branks" nor the scolding wives were limited to Eskdale! Tradition has it that witches were publicly burned near to Langholm Castle, and in *Langholm As It Was*,\* we suggest that this spot was near to "the Water of Ewis at that part called the Grieve," where sheep-stealers were "drownet to the death." The session records of Langholm of date 1720 contain some most interesting minutes anent the trial of a woman, living at Broomholm, for bewitching a man and causing him sudden sickness. It was also charged on a second count that she met a certain man

\* p. 397.

“in the town of Langholm on a Wednesday and that she looked him so in the face that it was with difficulty he rode home ; that he was sticked and spitted through the heart and that his neck was swelled with her.” For the breaking of these uncanny spells the remedy seems to have been “to score her on the forehead.” The verdict of the kirk session was the cautious one of “not proven,” and one of her accusers was told to apologize to the woman. He bluntly declined. This refusal, I may say, showed him to be a man of some originality of mind and considerable courage, because the kirk session then was quite as influential and powerful in its little kingdom as the Court of Session was in the whole kingdom of Scotland. He declared “he got stings enough with her, and that he would never ask a witch’s pardon as long as he lives.” In addition to this failure of his suit he received a rebuke from the Presbytery !

A well known character in the town fifty years ago was auld Charlie Hope. He was regarded as an authority on most phases of country life,—the weather, the crops, bird life, and so on. Charlie was one of those people who believed most firmly in bogles, ghosts, and witches, who in his eyes were all agents of evil. Indeed, it seems to me that the “little folk” had been a thoroughly bad lot, for one never reads or hears of them performing any useful or kindly action ! Head of the order, in Charlie’s opinion, was Auld Nick, as he called him. He implicitly believed in the personality of the devil and unhesitatingly ascribed to him, not only all dire calamities, but such happenings as the disturbing of the thatch

on a roof or the breaking of bushes in a garden. "He's been here again," he would say as he observed some such damage, though occasionally, speaking as an expert, he declared it was not he but some of his agents, the witches, who had done the wrong. There is one story about Charlie, which at the risk of digressing I must here relate. There had been some dispute as to certain burial spaces in Stapelgortoun kirkyard, and Charlie took it into his head that a certain influential local family had encroached on his ground. He made a most tremendous disturbance about it—indeed, it practically occupied the attention of the town for a time. As his wife was buried there, his annoyance was natural enough. One day Charlie was noticed at work on the stone dyke at the head of the grave, constructing an archway through it. Some one inquired the object of the alteration, and he explained that it was for use at the resurrection, "for," he said, "the rest o' the folk'll be oot o' the kirkyard and away through Sorby Hass\* afore she can clim' the dyke!" I have often wondered where the point was that Charlie thought "they" would make for at the sound of the trump.

In the country places round about Langholm, even until recent years, plenty of men and women could be found who firmly believed in witches, fairies, ghosts, and bogles. I expect this sensitiveness to the uncanny, or supernatural, was partly a dreg of the old Celtic blood, and partly the effect that the lonely hills, melancholy

\* A narrow pass among the hills which close in upon the kirkyard of Stapelgortoun. It lies to the right of the picture here shown.



STAPELGORTOUN KIRKYARD.

moors, and dark woods produced upon an imaginative race.

When I come to think of it, we had few superstitions such as even now exist in other places in connection with domestic life. For instance, we might turn the bread loaf upside down and not imagine for a moment that we were wrecking a ship; we passed the salt (if the idea struck us—which was improbable!), without feeling that we were helping each other to sorrow; and if a picture fell from the wall we attributed the mischief to a loose nail or a faulty cord, but never to Providence. But if a lame bird tumbled down our wide chimneys or a corby croaked on the roof, we virtually abandoned all hope of the recovery of a sick person. All our superstitions seemed to attach themselves to natural phenomena—sounds and sights, messages by birds, and the like, or to the appearance of fairies and bogles, or the influences which elves and goblins exercised over the loves and hates of men and women.

Many of the evils supposed to have been brought upon a house by witches and goblins were averted, it was seriously believed, by planting a rowan tree as near to a dwelling as possible. Evidence of this belief may still be seen near many a country cottage.

I remember a local minister who was greatly annoyed by the too frequent visits of one of his elders, a disagreeable troublesome body. One day when this man landed up at the manse as usual, he found the minister planting a rowan tree in his garden. “Aye!” began the visitor, “So ye’re plantin’ a rowan-tree tae keep the witches away?” “Oh, no,” replied his spiritual head,



"I could manage the witches all right if only I could find some means of keeping the *elders* away!" And the elder saw the hint.

There was an old farmer, who, at his own fireside one winter night, gave me a graphic account of a visit he had recently paid to "the wise woman of Brampton," as he named her, whom he went to consult as to the means he should adopt to break a spell which an old woman in his own neighbourhood had put upon his cows to prevent them yielding their milk. He told me, too, what steps he had taken, on the advice of the witch, to have the evil removed. On another occasion he declared to me, with manifest conviction, that his wife had seen a company of fairies on a tree overhanging the well to which she had gone for water.

I knew another man in Canonby whose great dread was "the evil eye." He was most careful as to the kind of person he should meet as he went to his work of a morning. If he happened to meet a certain woman he would quietly return. When I asked him once why he had come home, he replied that he had met "the devil's rattle-bag," and added that if he had persisted in going to work that day disaster would have followed.

We were continually hearing, too, in my early years of people having seen ghosts and bogles; of strange eerie sounds being heard in the woods and among the hills, and especially up the burns or gills. An aged relative of my own often declared to me that once at midnight she had clearly seen a man on a white horse riding over the mansion-house of Westerhall. Not a few legends and superstitions, handed down from the Covenanting times,

grouped themselves round this historic seat of the Johnstones. The name Bogle Gill, a ravine in the Stubholm Wood, suggests an association with these legendary sprites which, according to popular belief, dwelt in all the woods and rivers. Down to some 30 years ago few people would have cared to pass this place after night-fall, and the same fear clung around that spot in the Galaside Wood known as "The Little Brig,"—"where, 'tis said, the fairies ramble, and strange spectres nightly march." Each locality had its own favourite sprite, and some of the Ettrick Shepherd's most thrilling tales relate to these.

The classical goblin of Eskdale was the Bogle of Todshawhill, known as "Gilpin Horner," which Sir Walter Scott introduces with such effect into his *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, there connecting it with the Cranstouns, who for some years held the lands of Langholm after the forfeiture of the Maxwells.\* Sir Walter's account, however, is not accepted by the people of Eskdale. So far as my knowledge goes, the true story of "Gilpin Horner" has never before appeared in print, which is my excuse for including it here, the version being that of Dr. Brown, minister of the parish of Eskdalemuir.

"About the year 1691, at Michaelmas, on a misty evening, the following persons went away to fasten the Todshawhill horses, at the head of the Todshawhill bog, viz., John Moffat, son of James Moffat, one of the tenants in Todshawhill, and grandfather to the present John

\* See *Langholm As It Was*, p. 392.

Moffat, tenant in Garwald ; James Anderson, son of another of the tenants in Todshawhill, and uncle to James Anderson, at present residing at Watkerrick Dinnings ; William Nicol, uncle to James Nicol, at present at Watkerrick ; and James Dickson, at present at Grassyards. While these young lads were fastening the before-mentioned horses they heard a voice at some little distance crying to them through the mist, 'We'll tine, we'll tine.'\* William Nicol instantly answered, 'You shall not tine and me here.' On this they saw a creature come running towards them, having the appearance of an old woman above the middle, and with very short legs and thighs. So unexpected a sight made them instantly run for the cow loaning, where the women were milking the cows. In their haste, John Moffat fell in a mire, and the little creature waddled by him to get at the rest. When it came to the women they were as much afraid as the lads had been. But on one of the cows attempting to push at it, and it saying, 'God help me ; what means the cow ?' they became less terrified ; for they imagined that if it had been an evil spirit it would not have mentioned the name of God in the manner it did. They therefore sat still to finish the milking. And when James Anderson's mother called out to one of the women, whose name was Meggy, to bring her another calf to get its milk from the bught where they were confined, it said, 'How many Meggys hast thou ?' After this the women went home, and it followed. When they got to Todshawhill, it went into the house of James Moffat, and sat down by the fire.

\* That is,—“We'll be lost.”

James's family happening that night to have barley and milk for supper, they offered it some, and asked if it could take any. It answered, 'Oh, yes; we can sup barley and milk.' And when it had done, it said, 'It was very good,' and added that 'It had not got the like of it since the ill winter,' meaning, probably, 1674,\* or about 17 years before. They then gave it an old knife, with which it seemed much delighted. On the family going to worship, it sat silent all the time, and when they had done, it said, 'Many such sweet Psalms as that as our John Herron of Burtley sang.'† After all this had happened, they took it out to a barn, where they intended it should lie during the night; but they had no sooner shut the door, than they saw it upon the house top. Another account, however, speaks more probably, for it says that it remained in the barn till morning, and then came into breakfast at the request of the family. Its stay at Todshawhill and the neighbourhood was about a week—always going to lonely places through the day, but returning in the evening. During one of these days the family having heard, as it were, the noise of carts in the close, ran to the door to see what it was, but saw nothing. When they came back, it said, 'It would be some of our folks.' At another time, when one of the men, intending to go home, was changing his shirt before it, it said, 'Aye, sic a braw white sark; it is just like our bridegroom's, John Herron of Burtley.' So uncommon a spectacle naturally

\* The winter of "the Thirteen Drifty Days."

† The reference may be to *William* Herron, the Covenanter of Irongray, who was shot in 1685, a few months earlier than Andrew Hislop.

collected many spectators, and among the rest Thomas Bell, of Westside, the neighbouring farmer (grand-uncle to the present Thomas Bell, Esq., of Crurie), who, in order to certify that it was flesh and blood like other folks, took it in his arms, and was fully convinced that it was composed of both. After this the families at Todshawhill seem to wish to have got quit of it ; for the above-mentioned William Nicol is mentioned as taking it to Westside, and the people there were surprised how he durst ride before it alone. On which it said, 'God help you ; Willie is feared of naught.' This was the last saying of this mysterious creature, for it soon after disappeared. According to one account, it was seen for the last time sitting on a stone at the head of the Barmpool, below Yet-byre ; and, according to another, it was observed on the top of a rick of hay that had been overturned somewhere between Twiglees and Sandyford. The common opinion of people at the time was that it was a person who had been carried away by the fairies. As for the name of 'Gilpin Horner', this seems to have been given to it afterwards ; for the persons who saw it at the time, and those who tell the story with the greatest regard to veracity, never call it by any name except it be by the general one of the Bogle at the Todshawhill."

The dread of the supernatural and a sub-consciousness of its nearness produced in us a certain nervous feeling which revealed itself in many of our customs. So it came to pass that around the subject of death there was grouped a large body of superstition, partly the outcome of morbid fear and partly the remnants of ancient

superstitions. Apart from the evidences which might be seen in the condition of the patient, there were appearances and omens and signs held to be unerringly associated with death, and certain people, old women especially, became experts in the dismal science. As a boy I have listened, until my flesh began to creep, to eerie tales of death warnings, until almost everything in earth and air and sky became a prophet and messenger of evil. One would tell how, on the day her mother died, three strokes as from a willow wand were plainly heard on the house door, but when the knock was answered no one was to be seen. Or a low rumbling, of which no explanation could be found, was heard in the house, or perhaps the cup from which the patient drank broke in his hand, or that a raven perched on the chimney the day before, or a magpie on the window sill, or perhaps a light would be seen moving from the house or flashing into it—all of which were construed not as natural occurrences, neither coincidences nor accidental happenings, but as omens and “warnings” presaging death or disaster. People compared their individual experiences, and these were built up into a weird, uncanny lore, in which some folk lived almost daily in considerable nervousness and fear.

I recollect an event happening which not only served as gossip for many days, but was held to be in very truth a supernatural warning. There had been a dinner party at Milnholm one Saturday evening, and the guests, among whom were both ministers and elders (which made the scandal all the greater) took to playing cards —“the devil’s cards” as we called them. Forgetful of

the approach of Sunday, they played until past midnight, when suddenly a strange breath seemed to pass through the rooms, and immediately every light save one was extinguished, even as on that memorable night when Tam O'Shanter halted awe-struck before Kirk Alloway and "in an instant a' was dark." Great consternation ensued. Wraps were hurriedly sought for, and with all speed each guest departed to his own home. News of the incident leaked out, and though those concerned sought to hush it up, there was much scandal about it throughout Eskdale. Whatever the explanation of it may be I believe the incident really happened. My informant was at the time a servant in the house, and he told me that the most extraordinary part of the affair was that the only light remaining unextinguished was that in the hall, to enable the erring guests to see their way out, —so he explained. I do not want to joke about what we all regarded at the time as a clear reproof by Providence for the daring violation of the Sabbath law, but one cannot help admiring the tactful and artistic way in which the hall light was left burning!

It is well known that during the raiding period on the Borders there was an extraordinary amount of superstition existing in the minds of the people. The ballads indicate this fact, and many of the legends and traditions which to-day form so delightful a body of literature arose out of superstitions long held, not by the Borderer alone, but having an origin in a common source of myth. Down into my early years there were tag-ends of these old legends floating about in the folklore of the district, and naturally they had to be accom-

modated with local habitations. I remember one, then often repeated, which serves to illustrate my point. This was a romantic legend, attached to the Langfauld Wood but of course identical with a similar tale in many another locality. Like so many of our Border legends and ballads, it embodied a romance and also had the usual tendency towards tragedy.

Two lovers were engaged as servants at the same farmhouse. They set a tryst to meet by moonlight at a certain tree in the depths of the Langfauld Wood. The girl happened to arrive a short time ahead of the appointed hour, and what was her amazement to find, under the tree, a newly-dug grave! Suspecting treachery, she, with wonderful courage, climbed into the leafy tree and there awaited events. Presently there came her false lover, and with him another man, unknown to her. They conversed earnestly by the side of the grave, and waited there some time, doubtless for their victim, who, unknown to them, was watching and listening. At length, wearied of waiting, the men left the place, and the young lady descended and quickly made for home. Next morning her lover came to her, apparently as if nothing had occurred. But, looking stedfastly at her faithless swain, she repeated these lines :—

“ One moonlight night, whilst I sat high,  
Watching for one, but two came by—  
The leaves did shake and I did quake  
To see the grave which two did make.”

The manifest alarm of the man was in itself proof of his guilt, and, appropriately to the demands of the plot, he fled and afterwards hanged himself.



One of the commonest means by which the morbid fears of that day and generation were nursed was the frequent appearances of "white women." I suppose it was the prevalence of this special form of the weird and eerie in the Langholm district which became crystallised into our Border tale of *The White Woman of Turras*. Many of these appearances were only the result of practical jokes played upon the nervousness of an imaginative people, and others were due to such poor, demented creatures as I have referred to in a previous chapter. A great sensation, which lasted nearly a fortnight, was created some 40 years ago by the appearance of a "white woman" in the plantation along the right bank of the Esk near to Cogie. Night after night, exactly at midnight, sounds of singing came from the dark wood, and presently a white form might be seen gliding among the trees. These manifestations would last about half an hour, and then the singing, which emotional folk living in the neighbourhood described as most enchanting but unearthly, would cease, and a strange and awesome silence would fall again upon the plantation. Many were the theories and speculations as to this uncanny occurrence, but for long it baffled all solution. At length it was accidentally discovered that a young woman, a shy, morose person, who with her mother lived a secluded life in a cottage at the back of Moodlawpoint, had adopted this means of introducing some sensation into her hitherto uneventful life. She certainly succeeded!

Most of the "visions" and "appearances" were of course attributable to natural causes—not infrequently of an amusing character. I remember an incident

occurring at the Kirkstyle, in Ewes, which for a long while made people hesitate to pass the kirkyard after nightfall. Some wedding festivities were in progress in one of the old-fashioned thatched cottages— a cosy little “clachan” they made— whose site is now taken up by part of the kirkyard. The fun had grown fast and furious when suddenly, about midnight, the old kirk bell, hung on a large tree near the kirk, gave a toll. It sounded strange at that dread hour and most of the merry-makers took note of it as an untoward happening, but said nothing. Another toll, and the women folk began to look at each other. A minute or two later yet another and all the revelry ceased. Once again it came, and produced something akin to consternation. Enjoyment was now out of the question. Some of the men made light of the matter and offered to investigate. They cautiously approached the kirkyard, when once more the bell tolled, louder than before, and the brave investigators tumbled out of the kirkyard, each eager to be the first to reach the safe high road. Here a consultation was held, and as this obviously was a supernatural occurrence, though probably connected with the lower rather than the higher life, it was decided that the state of things ought to be reported to the minister. To the manse, therefore, they went, and rousing the minister explained what had brought them there. He very properly rebuked their faithless fears and offered to go with them to the kirkyard to prove that their alarm was groundless. They had just reached the bridge over the Kirkton Burn when once more the bell tolled, louder and more terrible than before. Each man

instinctively looked to the minister. But that good man was already on his knees, saying "Let us pray!"

A terrible night of suspense and terror ensued, that dreadful bell mercilessly tolling at irregular intervals, and great was the relief when the dim morning broke. Investigation being made, the secret was laid bare. Some rascally person, into whose blood the very spirit of Auld Nick himself must surely have entered, had tethered the minister's goat to the bell-rope, and the mysterious tolling happened, of course, whenever nannie got to the end of her tether!

Great indignation was aroused, but who it was that "had done this scandalous thing" was not found out until many years later, when there returned to his native valley from America a buirdly and prosperous gentleman, who made full confession, that it was he who as a mischievous boy, had "just for the fun of the thing" tethered the goat to the bell-rope that never-to-be-forgotten night!

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

I HAVE mentioned that our cottages in Langholm 70 years ago were small, and that from them light and air were rather skilfully excluded. Such houses would be condemned now—they violated every canon of sanitation,—yet in some mysterious way the health of the town was excellent, and many of the inhabitants lived to quite a remarkable age. Ailing folk with chronic infirmities were not more common than they are now, though, perhaps, fevers and consumption and rheumatism were rather more in evidence.

In his *Statistical Account* of Langholm, written in 1793, the Rev. Thomas Martin gives some striking figures showing the ages which some of the people reached. He mentions that Mr. James Mouat, a surgeon, who lived in the top house of the Gas Entry, died in 1776 at the age of 120. In 1781 George Swan, cooper, died aged 105, and worked until a short time before his death. John Brown, dyer, lived to 101, and on his death in 1776, he left his business to be carried on by his sons, two striplings of 82 and 76 respectively. Within two years of the date of the *Account*, William Nicol, tenant in Calfield, at the age of 90 was hale and hearty, and able to attend markets and fairs. Mr. Martin says that three men had died whose ages were 90, 89, and 83; and four women whose

ages were 88, 86, 84, and 79. There were then men alive aged 90, 86, and 85, two of 83 and three who were 82, 81, and 79. Six women were alive whose ages were 88, 87, 85, 83, 82, and 81. Half-a-Croon Andra, whom I have already referred to, lived to the age of 92, and many others might be named. Mr. Martin adds that there were seldom any epidemic diseases, and that few fevers occurred, and when they did seldom proved fatal. My own recollection differs somewhat on the last point, as I can recall not a few outbreaks of fever and kindred diseases, but still as a rule people lived to a green old age. Even in recent years we have had not a few illustrations of the healthiness of Langholm. My highly respected friend of many years standing, Mr. Robert Smellie, is still hale and well, in his 93rd year; Mrs. Wilson died a few years ago at the age of 93, and Mr. James O'Hair was, I believe, 92. A more striking case still was that of my wife's uncle, Alexander McVittie of the Ha'crofts, who died at the age of 93 in the room in which he was born. He worked the farm until within a year or two of his death! My own kinsman, James Hyslop of Barngleis, died a few months ago within some four months of his 100th year. His sister, poor body, "slippit away" at 90.

It will be correctly inferred from this mortality table that Eskdale air tends to health and longevity. The fashion—for it is little else—of going from home to recuperate has always seemed to me a needless one. My own convalescence has usually been effected under Eskdale skies, excepting on an odd occasion when I have been persuaded to take a week or two at Silloth. I

remember that one of the ministers at Westerkirk, having some infirmity, travelled to various health resorts, but with little perceptible benefit. One day he was bemoaning this to auld Wullie o' the Bonese, who had never been further south than Langholm nor farther north than Selkirk.

"I dont know where to try now," said the minister, despairingly. "I've been at Bridge of Allan and I've been at Harrogate and Cheltenham, and even now I am very little better."

Wullie listened sympathetically and then cautiously asked, "Did ye ever think o' trying *Westerkirk*, sir?"

The diseases with which we were familiar in my youth were both differently named and differently treated than they are now. Our list of ailments was limited. Those which were chronic we called "incomes!" A man would have an "income" in his knee or his hand, but wherever or whatever it was, it usually prevented him doing any more work! When I come to think of it we had in our town a considerable number of men, all of whom had "incomes" about their persons but never one in their pockets. And as a consequence their wives had thrown upon them all the responsibilities of the household whilst the afflicted men dandered about the town, cracking and often drinking with their cronies, waiting for the arrival of the coaches or sunning themselves at their doors. Almost every cottage had at its door a large stone, occasionally perforated, on which these men sat through many a sunny hour, whilst their wives struggled on with the burdens of life. And here I would like to say what splendid women many of these

were,—brave, capable, and honourable, bearing their loads without complaint—thrown away on worthless, feckless men, who were content to see their wives day in and day out slave for them and their children.

And by the way our praise of women related oftener to domestic virtues than to personal charms. If a woman was industrious in her home we said she was “fell.” If she was unusually scrupulous on the matter of cleanliness we said she was “a vera perfect woman.” Whereas if she was bonnie we gave the qualified praise that “she wasna ill-faured.”

We spoke often of illnesses beginning with a “growing.”\* Superstitious people interpreted this as “some one walking over your grave,” but sensible folk saw in it evidence of a chill, and dated the illness from it. Another common ailment was one we called “dwams,” which, I think, were attacks of faintness. An old lady of my own acquaintance was terribly subject to these attacks, which generally came, like Chairlie Hogg’s switherings, at the most inopportune moment. She used them as an act of generalship, as some women use tears,—as an effective means of obtaining her own purposes, and so the “dwams” became something of a nuisance to all her relations, and to her patient, canny husband most of all. One day he was delving, “putting in the garden” we termed it, whilst she stood watching him and discussing various pieces of local gossip. Suddenly he saw symptoms of a “dwam,” and was alarmed, not so much because it was at all

\* The “ow” was pronounced as in “now.”

serious, but, perhaps, because she was a rather heavy person and in a fainting condition difficult to be handled by one man. A happy inspiration came to him. "Eh!" he exclaimed, "A' believe that's the weddingers!" and, sticking his spade into the soil, made a bee-line for the front door. But she was there before him! Despite her disappointment, for of course there were no "weddingers," the "dwam" did not come off. I have referred to her husband as a "canny" man. The term implied a fairly wide certificate of character, the leading idea, perhaps, being inoffensiveness, but also suggesting lack of individuality. The word was most frequently used by way of excuse—"he's a decent, canny body." "Oh aye," Lencie Armstrong would reply, "he's canny eneuch; A've never heard o' him kickin' folks' doors or gi'en them impudence in the street!"

For the most part we doctored ourselves, unless the case was a serious one. When ill, we turned up Buchan,\* or went to some local expert, and were "bled." This was a favourite remedy; and there were other men, often weavers, who could perform the operation. Jamie Dalglies had himself "bled" every spring at the May fair, whether he was ill or no. If the disease was not of this nature, we might have recourse to "Peg Ir'in's bottle," which was as well known in Langholm in my younger days as any of the patent medicines are to-day. It is told that Peg, who lived at Skipper's Cottage, gathered the ingredients of her famous bottle from the wild herbs growing on the banks of the Esk.

\* Dr. Buchan's *Household Medicine*.



She was often consulted by people from a distance. I remember hearing of one cure she effected, which strikes me now as somewhat peculiar, and I mention it to illustrate her reputation. A sick man out of Canonby came to her and told her that he had had a curious dream. He dreamt that he had his lungs out on his knees to examine them, and that "they lookit unco dry." For this state of things Peg prescribed a course of train oil, and, after taking it, so the story goes, the man ailed nothing more!

For bruises, sores, and cuts, we rarely troubled the doctor, but went ourselves down to the bank of Wauchope Water at Cowan's Pool, and there obtained the leaves of a certain plant which flourished only at this place. These we applied to the wound, and bandaged it up. So potent were its curative powers, that in most cases, even a serious cut was healed in two or three days at the longest. This very efficacious plant has now entirely disappeared. When the retaining wall was built to keep Wauchope Water from encroaching on the Raw, and the embankment was raised, the roots must have been completely destroyed. In appearance the plant resembled the common "docken," among which it was generally found. It was a most valuable accessory to our domestic medicines.

If in those days our medical resources were elementary and rough, our dentistry was rougher still. Of course we had no qualified dentists. On occasion, if a tooth had to be extracted, we went to the doctor, but quite as often we went to the barber or some clever-handed weaver, and in later years to "the drug's," as

we styled the chemist. When Lencie Armstrong had toothache he was persuaded to go to the latter, and afterwards he often related his adventure. He gave an appalling description of the ill-usage he received, emphasising his own extraordinary patience under terrible provocation, until at length it being exhausted, he seized the operator by the shirt-front, and literally pitched him to the other side of the room. Naturally this brought matters to a crisis, and "the drug" declined to proceed further. Lencie rather hinted that in the interval the instrument was still attached to the tooth, but we treated this as a picturesque addition to the original story! However, an agreement was at last arrived at, and the molar got out. At the end of the ordeal, it was an open question we gathered, who, "the drug" or Lencie, came out of the conflict with most physical damage.

I myself have tried my hand at amateur dentistry! In these pages I have frequently had occasion to mention my maternal grandfather, Jamie Armstrong, a near relative, by the way, of Lencie himself. He was what we called "an outlandish kind o' man,"—of great physical strength, and also of a strength of will which justified people in sometimes saying disagreeable things about him, but withal a genuine, sincere man who scorned every doubtful practice and went to the kirk every Sabbath day. He was "by ordinar," we said, in dress, manner, and opinion. One of his eccentricities was to follow the hounds, mounted on a ridiculous looking donkey and wearing a tailed coat and a shabby "tile" hat. Being very tall and the "cuddy" very short, my grandfather's feet were only a few inches from the ground. But only in this

way would he go. We thought little of it then, but in looking at him down the vista of years, he strikes me now as a decidedly comical figure. In the Town-head kirk, though my grandmother (one of the saints of the denomination) sat downstairs, he persisted in sitting "in the loft," in an uncomfortable seat at the top of a long pew which was occupied by another family. Very ill-natured he always was should they get into the pew before him. The fear of this took him to the kirk about half an hour before the regular time. But what I wished to relate was this: In some unaccountable way my grandfather conceived a strong liking for myself and would have no one else to attend to certain of his wants. Though only a youth, I had to go down every Saturday afternoon to see him and "crack" with him go and buy his snuff and tobacco and do anything else he wished. One Saturday something had kept me later than usual, and when I went in I found him in a very bad humour. "Where hev ye been?" he asked in a very surly tone. I looked at him in surprise and asked if he wanted me particularly. "Aye, A' wanted ye," he continued; "A' want my hair cut, and A' want a shave, and A' want some pipes, and A' want ye to draw a tooth."

I was rather staggered by the last item, but taking up his string of requirements I answered, "Yes, and ye want a new hat, for we've A' made up oor minds that ye're no gaun to the kirk again in that disgraceful ane ye've been wearin!" This hat question had been often discussed among us, but our representations to him had hitherto produced no effect. He demurred, of course,

but I saw my chance and consented to perform the other services only if he agreed to this one also. I fear the tooth-drawing was a rough business, but he was a man of iron nerve and said little about it, which, all things considered, I thought was very decent of him.

With these rough and ready customs of doctoring it is not surprising that accidents sometimes happened. There was that one, for instance, when Lencie Armstrong drank the turpentine. Lencie had a boil on his wrist and someone remarked to him that turpentine was a good remedy. Without further enquiry he stepped into Dickson the painter's workshop and took a long drink out of a disreputable looking paint jar. When Dr. Carlyle came, smelling even afar off the turpentine which now pervaded the whole house, he demanded to know "what the devil he had been doing now?" Measures were quickly adopted, and after a while Lencie recovered, though the doctor warned him that it had been a narrow escape.

Then there was the scene when Peter Hutchinson took the overdose of laudanum. I saw that scene. Almost in a fatal sleep Peter was hauled into the street by two men who, relieved occasionally by others, walked him up and down between the Square Pump and the Langholm Bridge for some three or four round hours. Whenever Peter showed a tendency to fall someone would flick him with a wet towel or dash in his face cold water from the Square Pump, for the doctor said he must at all costs be kept awake. The scene was not lacking in a comic element, for his wife, poor body, rendered hysterical by the fear and the excite-

ment, went about wringing her hands and calling upon the bystanders to help. "Eh, my lads," she kept entreating, "bring oot the pan lids—bring a' the pan lids for puir Peter." What with the deafening clatter of the pan lids at Peter's ear, the wailing of his wife, the eager, curious crowd, and the half dead man being almost carried round the Square Pump—it was an exciting afternoon. But again the means were effective and Peter recovered.

Of course, we had doctors in the town, and very "skilly" men they were. Though I never believed the report that the doctor of a neighbouring village took with him on his rounds one remedy only—a powder which he carried in a paper bag and administered in graded doses according to whether the ailment was a broken leg or the croup, yet we Langholm folk "upheld" our medical men as we did our tweeds, against all competitors.

Their practice covered a district about 15 miles square and should they be in the country we had to do the best we could under the circumstances. This gave a capital chance to those people among us who seemed to have come into the world with an intimate knowledge of medicine.

The doctor's man was almost of equal importance to the beadle, and frequently he was quite a "character." When we in Langholm spoke of "the doctor" we generally meant Dr. Carlyle, whose portrait is given overleaf. But it was in the time of one of his predecessors that the following incident occurred:—The doctor's man was one Sam'l Beattie, a taciturn, dour kind of man, who occasionally presumed on his semi-official position. One day his

master had a visitor who asked to be given a glass of water. The doctor called for Sam'l (for in those days we had no bells in our houses) and gave him the order.



DR. W. J. CARLYLE.

In a few minutes Sam'l appeared carrying the glass of water between his thumb and forefinger. The doctor reproved him for this, saying he must in future bring everything into the room on a tray.

Sam'l said "A' richt, doctor," and the incident passed from the latter's memory.

Months afterwards the doctor happened to be the proud possessor of a litter of very fine whelps, and wished to show them to a friend who had called. He shouted to Sam'l to "bring up the dogs," and took his friend into the surgery for the exhibition. Time passed but Sam'l did not appear. The doctor tried to hurry him up, and after a further delay Sam'l entered the surgery carrying a large kitchen tray on which the entire litter of whelps was confusedly grouped.

"What's the meaning o' this, ye auld haverin' fool?" angrily demanded the doctor.

"Oh, weel ye ken," said Sam'l, "no vera lang syne ye were juist gey insolent aboot me bringing a glass o' water i' my han', and said A'd to carry everything ben the room on a tray, sae A've brocht the whulps juist as ye direkkit."

It would be almost impossible for me to describe the unique position occupied in Eskdale by Dr. W. J. Carlyle, "for 52 years the beloved physician of this district." His professional reputation ranked very high, but it alone could never have given him the place he held in our appreciation. Our faith in him was boundless, and though as his patients we failed, through sheer "obduredness," to do what he ordered, we trusted and esteemed him as few men were esteemed. We had only one fault to find with him—he would *not* send in his bill. This was about the only cause of friction between him and the town. Many bills which were incurred in the

Fifties and Sixties have not been rendered yet, and the good old doctor has been sleeping in Stapelgortoun kirkyard these many years. Poor folk he attended more devotedly than rich, and he went about doing good without thought of fee or reward. In all weathers—rain, snow, and frost, as well as in the fine summer days—he travelled in his ancient gig, and people on the roads felt a sympathetic thrill as he passed them, hurrying to reach the bedside of his patient. On many a stormy winter night, perhaps as we were seated comfortably by the fire smoking our last pipe before going to bed, we would hear the doctor's gig taking the road up the bleak Wauchope glen, and though we seldom expressed it, our admiration was true and deep. In appearance he was as handsome as in character and disposition he was generous, forgiving, and magnanimous, and no portrayal of life in Langholm during the last two generations would be accurate which did not give to our venerated doctor a place on the line and in a good light.



## CHAPTER XII.

### FUNERAL CUSTOMS.

FROM what I have said in previous chapters, my readers will now readily surmise that on the occasion of a death among us the more morbid and gloomy elements were accentuated.

The fact that a death had occurred in a house was notified by the fan-light or the lower half of the window of the room where the body lay being covered by a strip of white cloth, which was removed immediately the funeral "lifted." It was our custom to sit up each night with the body, and certain people in the town had acquired a reputation in the performance of this melancholy duty, for which they appeared to possess a natural aptitude. Lencie Armstrong used to speak of faces which were "weel adapted for sitting up wi' a corp"—they possessed naturally the solemn look essential for such an eerie occasion. At a certain period this sitting up signified more than mere custom, for there was a very real danger that the body might be "snatched" by the emissaries of the notorious Burke and Hare, whose gruesome calling provided us with 'perhaps' the most nerve-testing experiences within my ken. So great was the terror that for a long time few people cared to venture out after nightfall. The fear arose not entirely from the risk of being murdered—a risk which, indeed, was not simply imaginary—but also from the constant

repetition of "resurrection" stories which naturally formed so large a part of the conversation at that time. With bated breath people would tell to awe-struck listeners how they had heard strange sounds at the dead of night—sounds as of a cart coming stealthily from the kirkyard. On hearing this others would declare that they too had heard the cart; then some one would have seen it, and tell how thick ropes of straw were twisted round the wheels to deaden the sound. Most of these stories were, of course, only the outcome of nervousness, but it was held as true that both of those notorious criminals, in their search for bodies for the doctors, had actually paid a visit to Langholm. To prevent the desecration of the graves, many of the burial places were surrounded by very high iron railings, and the coffins were bound with strong iron hoops. Not a few of these remembrancers of the Burke and Hare period may still be seen in the kirkyards of Eskdale. Graves were closely watched for five or six weeks, and many curious stories, types of which can be found in that interesting volume, *Mansie Wauch*, which was so popular in Scotland sixty years ago, were put into circulation. I remember my father being invited to organise one of these watching parties for Langholm kirkyard. With some difficulty he secured a number of men to undertake this dismal work, and they engaged a weaving shop on the head of the Well Close to use as their base of operations. My father's duty was to make periodical rounds of inspection to see that the watchers had not deserted their posts—an event which frequently occurred.

At a death the obsequies were not confined to the day of the funeral, but the coffining, or "chesting" as we called it, was a recognised part of the services, and to it also relatives and friends were invited. The invitations to the funeral were conveyed in "funeral letters," and we all held it a sacred duty to attend. Of old Jamie o' the Blough, it was said that, whilst he had health and strength he never missed a funeral in Langholm. When, at length, through increase of years, he could no longer pay this last mark of respect, we felt that yet another link with the past had been broken by the relentless hand of Time.

On the day of the funeral the male relatives of the deceased, wearing "weepers" (i.e., strips of linen, often covered with crêpe, let into the sleeve cuffs), and their hats bearing broad bands of crêpe gathered into a knot behind, stood for about half-an-hour on either side of the door and received the condolences of each one attending the ceremony. Formerly it was the custom to bring the coffin also to the door, and the visitors were expected to say something complimentary of the departed. There was a story told, though not of Langholm, that on such an occasion there came a man who cherished no very exalted opinion of the deceased, but being required by etiquette to make some favourable comment, gazed raptly for a while at the features of the dead man, and then turning away with a sigh, remarked, "Aye, it's a nice quiet corp!"

More than once during these proceedings spirits and fancy bread were served out to the men attending. This was done by the undertaker or joiner, whom we called

"the wright," and sometimes excesses occurred, which led to an agitation in the town to have the ancient custom abolished. Several public meetings were held to debate the proposal, and in the end "tasting" at funerals was abandoned by consent.

The religious service was also held at the door, and the minister's prayer on the occasion was always sympathetically if critically commented upon later. It was our custom to carry our dead to the kirkyard, and the lowering of the coffin was done only by the nearest relatives. At the head and foot and down the sides of it there were coils of black rope, which a slight pull easily unravelled, and by these the kith and kin of the deceased lowered the coffin into the grave. There was a very strict etiquette followed as to the distribution of these cords. The husband or eldest son, or other nearest relative, took the head, the next oldest or nearest the foot, and so on. The phrase that a husband "laid her head in the grave" was always used in connection with the funeral of a wife, and "to get a cord" in one or other of the positions was considered a compliment to any mourner. In my early years there was no further religious service at the graveside, but this has now all been changed.

Women never attended funerals in Langholm, but as soon as the procession "lifted" they came to the door to witness it "lift." Although a sad and solemn function a funeral was not infrequently made the occasion of feasting, and often too, I fear, of considerable drinking. I once heard a Langholm baker declare that he made more bad debts through the supplying of "funeral bread," as it was termed, than from any other cause.

On the Sunday following the funeral there was preached the funeral sermon,—a mark of respect which, seventy years ago, was paid to almost every adult person.

At the proceedings on the return of the relatives from the kirkyard, the conversation would naturally turn to the life and character of the deceased, and almost certainly to the death-bed scene. Though a due aspect of sadness was preserved at these post-interment gatherings, the gloom was now and again relieved by glints of humour. It was at one such, held in Canonby I think, that a relative incautiously told the story how the deceased when “near his hinder-end,” instead of occupying his mind with more serious things, demanded to have his own “blacks” produced for his inspection. It was a curious whim, and the distracted wife sought the more earnestly and tearfully to divert his mind from the subject, because with great economy and no little forethought she had already “made them down” into suits for the two little boys!

Often our unquestioning faith in divine things received strengthening by the evidences given of dying people of the efficacy of religion to calm and fortify the mind in prospect of the impending change. But sometimes we were scandalised by evidences of another kind. A well known resident of our town, who had led a most regardless life, and had rarely darkened a kirk door, lay very ill, and there went to see him a visitor, who skilfully led the conversation up to that dread change which he thought would soon come to the sick man. He spoke to him nicely about Heaven, and mentioned

some of the saints who had gone there from Langholm, naming particularly some of the good old elders of the Townhead kirk, whose godly fame was a household word in the town, and he added that maybe the dying man would also see them in Abraham's bosom. The invalid, who had been a hard drinker and a man of profane language, and had never consorted with such serious company, reflected a moment and then made his choice. "Desh't it, boys!" he said, "A' think A' wad juist raither gan to the other bit wi' auld Cuddyling and the miller" —two cronies with whom "he had been fou for weeks thegither."

When old Peggy Cairns died I heard a good deal concerning the circumstances of her latter end. One day she was heard repeating the hymn "The hour of my departure's come,"—an act, I may remark in passing, which was always held to be a sign of grace, and those standing by concluded she must be "far throu." Her kinswoman, Bet Runchy—which is Runciman—was present, and being an hysterical sort of person she fell a-greeting, and going up to the bed sobbingly asked the dying woman,

"Peggy! Oh Peggy, div ye ken me?"

"Ken ye?" answered Peggy in amazement and with a characteristic snap in her tone, "Wey, what's tae hinder mē to ken ye?" Naturally this produced a sort of anti-climax among those in the room.

Poor Peggy! She lived a long and lonely life of hard work and little comfort. I never could tell precisely how to classify Peggy's occupation. In the summer time she worked at the hay, and always got a job at the Calfield

“hairst,” shearing with the men and doing the work as efficiently as any of them. In the winter days and nights she occupied herself with spinning and knitting. Come with me into her humble home and her first word to you will be one of warning to “take care o’ the cardings.”\* These are arranged on the table near her large spinning wheel, which she is now working, and a smaller one for finer work stands near. The wool has been brought in from some farm which she has lately visited. She will soon spin it into yarn which will then be knitted into stockings. Her house is small but it holds two large beds well screened with striped cotton curtains — “dimity” I think the stuff was called — scrupulously clean and neat, but, with the curtains drawn, rather awesome looking. So felt that wee relative of her own who, in consideration of having promised her that when a man he would bring her “a cairtfu’ rabbits and a cairtfu’ pigs,” was allowed as a great favour to sleep one night in one of the beds. But happening to peer out between the curtains when all was still, and seeing Peggy reading the Bible by the light of a candle which filled the room with such strange and weird shadows, an acute nervousness suddenly seized hold of the bairn’s fancy. “A’ daurna lie in this bed for mooses,” he tremulously whimpered, and Peggy, much mortified, instantly had him carried back to his own home. She never quite forgave the bairn for this implied slight upon those great beds which were the joy and pride of the old woman’s life!

As, for a moment, I pause in my writing, I can see

\* The long, thin rolls of wool ready to be spun into yarn.

Peggy coming up Wauchope Raw from "the preaching," which, be the Sunday wet or dry, she never missed. She is clad in a coarse winsey gown over which is arranged corner-wise a shawl of shepherd's check, fastened by a large cameo brooch; a wide Quaker bonnet, the front filled in with clean white ruching; on her hands a pair of black mittens and in them her Bible, wrapped in a white handkerchief with a sprig of mint and southernwood on top, to ensure her keeping awake in the kirk, —a quaint old-world figure, yet not without its romance. For listen to her, over her cup of tea, and she will tell you with a gleam in her eyes how many lads she had one far-off day, but how she could never bring herself to marry "ony ane o' the muckle fallows!"

It was Peggy who first recited to me the legend of the Langfauld Wood, referred to on page 190, and she firmly asserted its absolute truthfulness.

When the town was canvassed for subscriptions for the building of the Boatford Bridge, Peggy's name happened to be on my list. I went, resolved to explain as delicately as I could that we did not expect a donation from her, but that I had just called to tell her all about the Bridge. But on entering her plain little room I saw her nervously handling some coins, and before I got my explanation made, the good old soul, who scarcely had a worldly comfort, had counted out into my hand five silver shillings—a curious anecdote, I fancy, with which to conclude a chapter on funeral customs!



## CHAPTER XIII.

### “THE TWA BRIGS.”

THE opening of the railway brought Langholm into much closer contact with that busy world which lay somewhere in the haze beyond our hills, and many changes were caused by its coming. Road traffic was at first not lessened perceptibly, though the hills no longer echoed back the bugle call of the mail coach, but slowly the transformation came to pass, and a silence fell upon our country roads. Inside Langholm, too, changes were seen. One of the great improvements in the means of communication was the building of the bridge at the old boat ford. Up to 1871 all communication between the Old and New-towns was by the Langholm Bridge, built in 1775, by my great-grandfather, Robin Hotson, who had as one of his younger workmen Thomas Telford, afterwards the famous engineer, born in a shepherd's cottage up in Westerkirk, but buried among the nation's great ones in Westminster Abbey. The story of the great flood in the Esk, which made the new bridge quiver, has often been told, and people have laughed at the tale of my great-grandmother, Tibbie Donald, Robin's wife, setting herself against the bridge to keep it from tumbling into the river. It is an excellent story, which has been told by every writer on Telford from Samuel Smiles down to the latest essayist, but I am sorry to say it did not happen. The actual facts are



LANGHOLM BRIDGE.

that Tibbie had placed all the savings of herself and her first husband, to the amount of £100 sterling, in the hands of Robin Hotson, her second husband, for this venture of the bridge. When she saw the flood, Robin being absent, she feared that this considerable sum was to be carried down the Esk, and she went about bemoaning her ill-luck, wringing her hands and saying, “Oh, ma puir hunner pun’! Oh, ma puir hunner pun’!” Telford tried to reassure her by saying that the bridge was in no danger.

#### TIBBIE’S COURTSHIP.

Tibbie came originally from Hawick, and after their settling in Langholm her husband died. It was not very long after his death that Robin Hotson began to pay his coy addresses to the widow. When he hinted at marriage, I have heard my father tell, Tibbie professed herself greatly shocked, and upbraided Robin for his haste. “O vera weel,” he replied, “but ye bade me tae the man’s bural and said A’ micht look in tae see ye.” “Deed did A’!” said Tibbie, and from that thrilling moment they were “engaged,”—though of course in Langholm we never used this word to describe that happy state.

Robin Hotson was the progenitor\* of a long line of builders, both Hotsons and Hyslops. Of the latter, I am the fourth, my eldest son is the fifth, and his son is the sixth generation carrying on the business in Lang-

\* So it has been understood, but since my father wrote these notes certain information has come into my possession which indicates that Robin Hotson’s father was also a builder.—R. H.

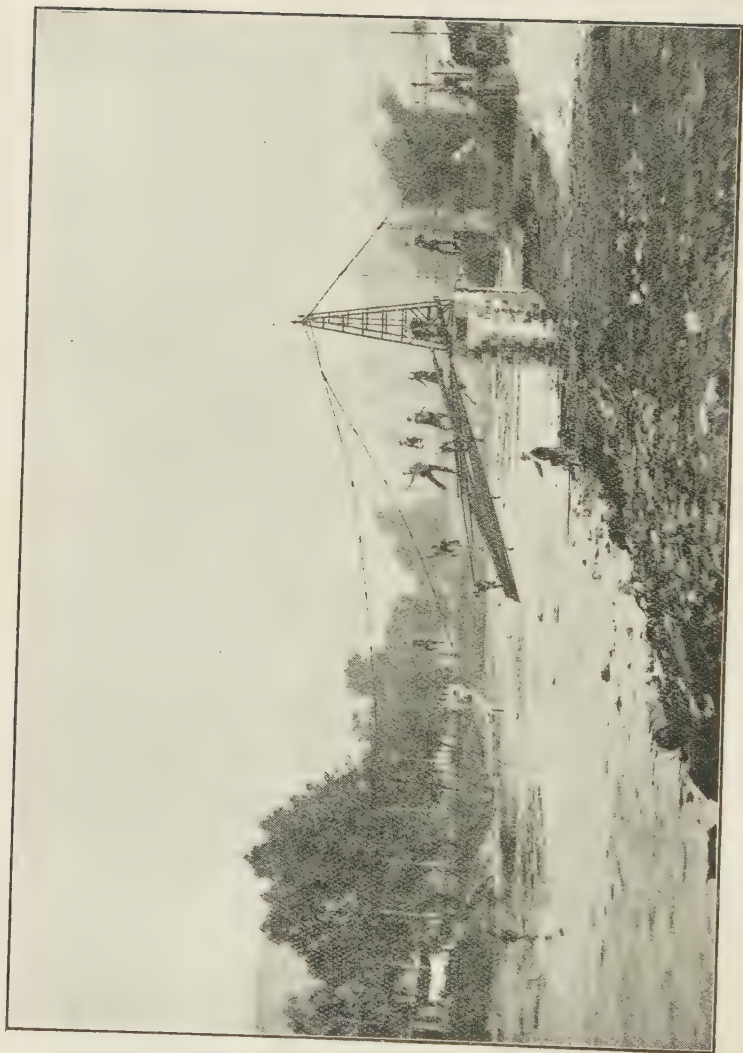
holm, a record of which I confess myself proud, and both branches of the family find a justifiable pride in the knowledge that it was their ancestor who gave to Thomas Telford, one of Britain's most famous bridge-builders, his first instruction and example. Therefore, for this reason alone, I was highly gratified when to me was given the contract, in 1880, for widening and restoring Langholm Bridge. My father naturally was greatly interested in the work, and I remember one day the present Duke of Buccleuch, then the Earl of Dalkeith, coming to see what was being done. I happened to be away from the job at the time, but my father told the above facts to "the Yirl," as he called him, who expressed his personal pleasure that the extension of the bridge should have been entrusted to the great-grandson of Robin Hotson, its original builder.

#### BOATFORD BRIDGE.

After the development of the tweed trade many workers in the New-town complained of the inconvenience of having to go round by Langholm Bridge to their work in the Old-town, and at last, to ease the strain, a movement was begun to have a Suspension Bridge built at the old boat ford. I was a member of the committee, and strongly recommended the adoption of a local plan, not pretentious but substantial. The majority, however, were enamoured of one which certainly looked splendid on the lithographed sheet, but which, as a practical builder, I suspected to be lacking in strength.

THE BRIDGE COLLAPSES.

However, it was adopted, and the bridge was finished and ready for the opening. It was a brilliant day in the August of 1871 when the barriers were removed and a large number of people, among whom were many children newly out of the schools in the Free Kirk Entry, known to old folk as the Boat-Ford Lane, crowded on to the bridge. In the grounds of the Established kirk, Messrs. Carruthers were waiting to take a photograph of the scene. The crowd naturally spread itself along the near side of the bridge, and that moment of suspense had arrived, when the photographer put his head under the cloth, then the bridge suddenly gave way, and the people were tumbled into the river amidst a mass of broken timber. Fortunately it went down very gently, and just as fortunately the river was low, otherwise there would have been a heavy death-roll, as the current is very powerful at that place. Naturally there was a scene of intense excitement. Such an occurrence had never before being witnessed in Langholm. Stories, mostly legendary I think, were told of frantic mothers rushing into the river, picking up a child and, finding it was not theirs, dropping it in again and passing on. The illustration given overleaf is from a photograph taken shortly after the occurrence and before the chain had fallen. It was Mr. Smellie, with his ever-ready wit, who at once applied to the scene the words of Burns in “The Brigs of Ayr,” in which the Auld Brig, stung by the satire of its rival about its “formless bulk o’ stane and lime,” retorts :—



THE FALLEN BRIDGE, BOATFORD.

“ And tho’ wi’ crazy eild A’m sair forfairn,  
A’ll be a brig when ye’re a shapeless cairn ! ”

When Mr. Smellie pictured the good old Langholm Bridge, which had breasted the floods of Esk for nearly 100 years, “standing laughing” at the wreck of the new fancy bridge lying in the river a few hundred yards off, we could all enter into the humour of the situation, especially as none of the injuries was of a serious nature. But the event created a tremendous sensation.

## CHAPTER XIV.\*

### THE COMMON-RIDING.

RIDING the marches is, in many Border towns, a time-honoured annual custom, and is popularly known as The Common-Riding. In Langholm, the ceremony is attended by all the “pomp and circumstance” of a great festival, and the Common-Riding Day has become the chief date in the calendar of Eskdale. Until quite recently it was one of the stipulations in agreements of hiring that the servant was to have holidays at Canonby Sacrament and Langholm Common-Riding.

The Award of the Court of Session in 1759 recognized that the burgesses of Langholm had certain legal rights in the Commonry, and pre-eminently in the Common Moss and the Kilngreen, which, with the pasture rights, were a valuable possession to the community. It became, therefore, a public duty on their part to see that these rights were maintained in their entirety, for themselves and their posterity. The boundaries of the Common lands were set forth in the Award, and were delimited by natural objects such as trees or ditches, but where these were not found, beacons or cairns were erected and pits dug—all of which served to

\* This chapter, taken with certain alterations from *Langholm As It Was*, is inserted here in answer to many urgent requests.—R.H.



indicate the marches between the different owners. To maintain these intact now became the duty of the inhabitants, who, accordingly, engaged a man to go out to the Common Moss and the Kilngreen once a year "to see gif a' the marches they be clear," report encroachments, clean out the pits, repair the beacons, and generally protect the interests of the people. This was done regularly for a long period. About the year 1765 it was done by one Archibald Beattie, better known as "Bauldy Beattie," the town drummer or crier. No doubt it would be by virtue of his holding this public office that the duty of protecting the Marches was assigned to him. For more than 50 years he walked the Marches, pointing out their limits and boundaries to all who cared to accompany him ; and he also "cried" the Langholm Fair at the Cross. Up to the year 1814 Bauldy Beattie went over to the Marches on foot. In 1815, one Archie Thomson, landlord of an inn, which then occupied the site of the present Commercial Hotel, seems to have perambulated the boundaries alone. In 1816 Thomson went over them on horseback, and soon he was accompanied by others—John Irving, baker of Langholm Mill, and Frank Beattie of the Crown Inn, being among the principal.\* These men were the

\* Some assert that Bauldy Beattie, the Town Drummer, also went on horseback in 1816, but as he would then be over 80 years of age, it seems doubtful whether the statement is accurate. A certain amount of legend has gathered round this man. In a small volume of poems on Eskdale, published by the late Thos. Rome, it is stated that Bauldy cried the Fair at the Castle Craigs for over 80 years !

Sir Chas. Pasley has commemorated him in a poem which contains the following lines :—

“fathers” of the Common-Riding, and it was they who in 1816 began the horse-racing, which has since been one of the features of the programme during the Common-Riding afternoon. Among those riding the Marches, there sprung up, not unnaturally, a spirit of competition as to the mettle of their mounts, and the races which resulted were at first confined to the animals which had gone round the boundaries. This is still a condition in certain of the races at the present day.

At first the races and sports were held on the Kiln-green, but in 1834 they were transferred to the Castle Holm, which was then, and for many years later, called the Muckle Kilngreen, part of it, indeed, being included in the lands given to the town by the Award of 1759. Horse-racing formed only a small part of the Common-Riding programme. The old Border games were entered into then with much greater zest and emulation than now—wrestling, for which there were entries from all over the Border country, notably from Cumberland, which sent famous wrestlers such as the Blairs, Wright, and Steedman, and many others, –high-jumping; climbing the greasy-pole, chasing the well-soaped pig, and other old-fashioned country sports, which in our day of professional athletics show a regrettable decline.

“ First Bauldy Beattie, glorious chief appears,  
Who joins to youthful force the sense of years ;  
Majestic ! how he moves, born to command,  
Heather his brow adorns, a sword his hand.

While other men by fashion led astray,  
Too blindly follow where she leads the way,  
He, against all her gaudy tricks secure,  
Preserves the manners of our fathers pure.”

With the introduction of horsemen, came the selection of the leader or Cornet, who was also Master of the Ceremonies in all the many recreations of the day. His following was at first a small one, numbering probably not more than six or seven, but during the succeeding years, as the enthusiasm over the great event became keener, the number of horsemen largely increased, and at the present time it is no unusual spectacle to see 70 of them spurring their steeds up the steep Kirkwynd, as they make for the Common Moss,—and a brave appearance they make, with the town flag flying in the breeze, a sight which, almost more than any other, stirs the pulses of Langholm men.

At first the selection of the Cornet was made entirely from the residents of the Old-town of Langholm. This was natural, seeing that in a strictly legal sense the Common, and all the privileges and rights conferred by the Award, belonged to them alone.

In 1843 a departure was made from this practice by the choice of a Cornet from the New-town when Robert Anderson, blacksmith, was chosen, and to him belongs the distinction of being the first “Meikleholmer”—to use the name given to the people of New-Langholm—to fill the honourable position. Since 1890, in response to a public demand, the election of the Cornet and a committee of management has been decided in public meeting of the inhabitants.

In recognition of the corporate sanction now given, to what was originally and for many years done entirely on personal initiative, the Provost, each Common-Riding

morning, formally hands to the Cornet the town's flag, and receives it again from him at the close of the day.

In the procession of which the Cornet is leader, there are carried, in addition to the Flag, the following emblems, most of them having some special significance, either in relation to the preservation of the Marches, or to the Summer Fair, on the day following which the Common-Riding has invariably been observed : —

I. — A BARLEY-BANNOCK and a SALTED HERRING fastened by a large nail to a wooden dish.

The Bannock symbolizes certain of the privileges of the baron, and therefore appertains to the Fair rather than to the Common-Riding itself. A bannock of barley, oats, or pease-meal, but usually of barley, was a perquisite of the servant of the baronial mill, due from the tenants and vassals under the obligation of thirlage. It was one of the *sequels*, which were not merely voluntary gratuities, but were due in virtue of the astringency of a tenant to a particular mill. All of these rights and privileges were continued to the Duke of Buccleuch, even after the Heritable Jurisdictions Act of 1747, and the Summer Fair, when so many of the Duke's tenants were in the town, would be a convenient opportunity for paying over this acknowledged perquisite. The servant to whom it was due would be the executive officer of the baron-bailie, who collected the baron's multures as well as the customs and tolls at the Fair. The proclamation of the Fair, which, as we have shown, preceded the collection of the tolls, would also be made by this officer, to whom is probably due the introduction

of the reference at the end of the Proclamation to the fact that he was to have "a barley bannock and a saut herring" for his dinner, for of course no such engaging and personal detail would appear in the original text. The abundance of barley-meal bannocks at the Fair, and the mention of one in the later versions of the Proclamation, would readily suggest the symbol when the two events came to be so closely associated about the year 1817.

The presence of the Herring is more difficult of explanation. It may have had its origin in the simple necessity of the baron-bailie's officer requiring some relish, or, as our Scots forefathers would have expressed it, some *kitchen*, to the decidedly dry fare of the barley-bannock. Or it may be that, just as the bannock is indicative of the baron's rights in the "mills," so the herring indicates his rights in the "fisheries" as conferred by the Burgh charter of 1621. Even though expressly mentioned in a charter, the rights of a baron in respect of the fisheries were often matters of dispute, and a title was as often obtained by the exercise of the rights for the prescriptive period as it was given by the charter itself. It may therefore have been in support of his claim to the whole of the fishery rights that the baron-bailie of the Duke first brought the herring into conjunction with the barley-meal bannock at the Fair. But, admittedly, the origin of its presence is only a matter of speculation.

II.—THE SPADE.—This is used for cutting the sod at different points of the Common, and for clearing out the

pits which originally marked the boundaries of the Common Moss. On the return from the hill, it is usually bedecked with heather "lately pulled frae Whita side." For over 50 years the Spade was carried by William Armstrong, better known as Willie Dick. It was one of the incidents of the Common-Riding Day to see Willie, disdaining the plank bridge, dash through the Water of Ewes. There was about it something of the old moss-trooping recklessness and unconcern which his forefathers often displayed. As one of the events of the day it ranked in interest next to the Cornet's Chase.

III.—THE THISTLE.—A picturesque accompaniment of the Common-Riding, whose origin and purpose are alike obscure. Being the national emblem it may have been adopted as a warning in symbol of the punishment awaiting those who "wounded" the town.

IV.—The fourth emblem, in addition to the Flag, carried at the Common-Riding, is the Floral Crown. This is probably a comparatively recent addition, and can have no historic significance.

The most interesting feature of the Common-Riding is undoubtedly the Crying of the Fair. The Fair and the Riding of the Common have no necessary or historical connection, beyond the fact that the latter was celebrated on the day following the Summer Fair.<sup>1</sup> From what has already been said, it will easily be seen how the two events were brought together. According to the text of the Proclamation already quoted, the Fair was to be held "for the space o' aucht days," the words "and upwards"

being added later. Naturally the season was made the occasion of a general holiday. When, therefore, Bauldy Beattie, who had probably proclaimed the Fair, both on the Kilngreen and at the Cross, required to go with his companions to see if the Marches were clear, no date would be found more suitable for the duty than the slack day following the great day of the Fair. Even then the Proclamation would be regarded as the quaint survival of a past century, and it would be a natural proceeding to beguile the resting time at the Castle Craigs with a repetition of its well-known phrases. The custom, once formed, would soon gather round it the traditional literature with which we are now familiar. As the sentiment of the proceedings began to make its appeal to the people, they would be enjoined to take part in it as a public duty, and so, gradually, the whole function would evolve into its present shape, and the verses given overleaf would become attached to the original text.

The Crying of the Fair falls naturally into three parts. The prologue calls upon the townsfolk to go out in defence of their rights; the central theme is the ancient Proclamation; and the epilogue expresses the satisfaction which comes from a duty faithfully performed. The local poets have employed their gifts to enhance the honour of the occasion, and their parts are also couched in the language of the period, even as is the Proclamation itself. Regret must be expressed that recent "criers" have taken considerable liberties with the texts, both of the Proclamation itself and of the introduction and conclusion. In *Langholm As It Was* the text of the Proclamation as it was given in the *Gentleman's Magazine*

in 1731, is quoted, and a doubt expressed whether even it is entirely free from textual change. But, obviously, it must approximate to the original text more closely than that given below. Probably the versions used by old John Irving, who "cried the Fair" for 25 years, were nearest to the historic text, both in the Proclamation and the accompanying verses, and they are therefore quoted here, as given by him :—

PROCLAMATION OF THE LANGHOLM FAIR AND  
COMMON-RIDING.

After demanding "Seelence," John Irving said :—

"Gentlemen; The first thing that I am gaun to acquaint you with are the names of the Portioners'\* grounds of Langholm, from whence their services are from.

Now, gentlemen, we are gaun frae the Toun,  
And first of a' the Kilngreen we gan' roun' ;  
It is an auncient place where clay is got,  
And it belongs to us by Right and Lot ;  
And then from there the Lang-wood we gan throu',  
Whar every ane may breckans cut and pou ;  
And last of a' we to the Moss do steer  
To see gif a' oor Marches—they be clear ;  
And when unto the Castle Craigs we come,  
A'll cry the Langholm Fair—and then we'll beat the drum.

Now, gentlemen, after what you have heard this day concerning gannin' roun' oor Marches it is expeckit that every ane wha has occasion for peats, breckans, flacks, stanes, or clay will gan oot this day in defence o' their properties, and they shall hear the Proclamation o' the Langholm Fair upon the Castle Craigs."

\* Portioner is no doubt "apportioner" abbreviated. It related to the proprietor of small feus or "portions" of a landed property. The designation and its equivalent "proportioner" occur frequently in Registers and other documents of the 17th and 18th centuries, but are now seldom used. Probably at that date the names were recited.



On the return from the Hill, John resumed :—

“ Now, gentlemen, we hae gane roun’ oor hill,  
Sae now A’ think it’s richt we had oor fill  
O’ guid strang punch—’twull mak us a’ tae sing,  
For this day we hae dune a guid thing.  
For gannin’ roun’ oor hill we think nae shame,  
Because frae it our peats and flacks come hame,  
Sae now A’ wull conclud and say na mair,  
But gif ye’re pleased A’ll cry the Langholm Fair.”

“ Hoys yes! That’s ae time. Hoys yes!! That’s twae times. Hoys yes!!! That’s the third and the last time.

THIS IS TAE GIE NOTICE,

that there is a muckle Fair to be hadden i’ the muckle Toun o’ the Langholm on the 15th day o’ Jul’y, auld style, upon His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch’s Merk-land for the space o’ aucht days and upwards, and ony hustrin, custrin, land-louper or dub scouper or gae-by-the-gate swinger, wha comes here to breed ony hurdum or durdum, huliments or bruliments, hagglements or bragglements or squabblements, or to molest this public Fair, shall be ta’en by order o’ the Bailie and the Toun Council and his lugs be nailed to the Tron wi’ a twalpenny nail, until he sit doon on his hob-shanks and pray nine times for the King and thrice for the muckle Laird o’ Ralton, and pay a groat to me Jamie Ferguson, bailie o’ the aforesaid Manor,—and A’ll awa’ hame and hae a barley bannock and a saut herring tae ma denner by way o’ auld style.”

It is not difficult to detect the interpolations in this text. For example, the insertion of the date, 15th July, and the mention of the “ Duke of Buccleuch’s Merk-land,” show that when the Summer Fair became the principal one in Eskdale, the original Proclamation was adapted to the new circumstances by these and other insertions. The mention of the date would be necessary in either the original or the later texts. But owing to the alteration of the calendar in 1752 by the dropping of the 11 days, it would become advisable to mention that the Summer Fair had been originally fixed for the 15th, and not the 26th July. Hence the emphasis on the *auld style*.

The reference to the Duke’s Merk-land is rather mis-

leading. From time immemorial, the Fair had been held on the Little Kilngreen, which, as the evidence given in 1759 proved, had never belonged exclusively to the Duke, and certainly was not his original Merk-



JOHN IRVING

land, but had been held in common, and freely enjoyed by the inhabitants of Langholm. It is, therefore, in every way probable that the Fairs held under the

Nithsdale charter had been held on the Kilngreen, and though, naturally, the charters granted to the Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch provided that the Fairs should be held on their land, it was found more convenient to continue to hold them on the Kilngreen.

The mention of the Town Council, too, was probably introduced by some one who could not separate the idea of a "bailie" from that of a municipal body. Of course there was no Town Council in Langholm until 1893. John Irving himself introduced current "hits" into his Proclamation, as, for instance, when he came to the words "twalpenney nail" he always touched the nail by which the herring and bannock were fixed to the platter, and added "o' Jock the nailer's ain hand-making."

Most of the observances in connection with the Common-Riding are maintained strictly according to precedent, and it is therefore the more to be deprecated that the old words of the Proclamation, some of them old Scots and others pure Border words, and the quaint language of the verses should be smoothed out and Anglified. The Crier should be instructed to preserve the ancient text, and keep it free from his own personal preferences.

It may interest readers who are not Eskdale people, to learn how the Common-Riding is celebrated. It is the time when our good old town is seen at its gayest and best. Langholm people from all over the world turn their thoughts homeward on "the 15th day o' Jul'y, auld style," and all who are able endeavour to be in Langholm over the great event. It is a season of family re-unions, of cordial meetings between schoolfellows of long ago, who may not

have met since they sat on the same form in the old school ; a time, moreover, when Langholm looks her bonniest and charms once again the hearts of all her children. The dawning of the Common-Riding is eagerly anticipated, and every item on the lengthy programme is enthusiastically observed.

The proceedings begin at 5.30 a.m., when the Flute Band and the Pipers perambulate the town, playing popular airs and quickly assembling a considerable crowd, who follow them to the Hillhead, on the northern spur of Whita, to witness the Hound Trail. This is a race between foxhounds specially trained, which since its commencement in 1845, has excited much interest along the Borders. After the race has been determined there is but time for breakfast before the more important features of the day begin. At 8.30 the Cornet musters his supporters, generally between 60 and 70 horsemen, at the Town Hall, where the town's standard is formally handed to him by the Provost, with many injunctions to bear it worthily in that day's proceedings. Headed by the Langholm Town Band, a Procession is then formed. It proceeds up High Street, across the Langholm Bridge, and round the old Pump in Buccleuch Square ; then back to the Townfoot, and thence again to the Market Place. On the way the Band plays certain Scots airs - "O' a' the Airts the Wind can Blaw," "Thou Bonnie Wood o' Craigie Lea," "The Flowers o' the Forest," and others, and the townspeople would jealously resent even the slightest alteration in the programme.

The Procession has as yet only the Spade and the Bannock with it. On arrival at the Market Place, still

referred to by aged persons as the Cross, the first portion of the Fair is "cried"—demanding the attendance of the burghesses to keep the Marches clear. The Cornet then leads his men up the Kirkwynd and over the flank of the hill to the Castle Craigs on the Common Moss. Here the Fair is again cried, and refreshments—barley bannocks and salt herrings, moistened, perhaps, with some favourite beverage,—are served. The horsemen having reached the top of the hill ride round the Monument to Sir John Malcolm, one of Eskdale's most notable sons, which forms so conspicuous a landmark "through all the wide Border." An extremely pretty sight it is to see the horsemen on the hill, and to watch the perilous descent straight down its steep and rocky face. On their arrival at Mount Hooley, the Cornet and his merry men are met by the Band, bringing with them the great Thistle and the Floral Crown, and also by some hundreds of children with heather besoms, the complement of the Spade, which now is also bedecked with heather pulled from Whita side or the Common Moss. The Procession again forms and marches to the Townhead, then returns to the Townfoot, the Band still playing the familiar Scottish airs. On arrival at the Market Place the Crier mounts a grey horse, and proclaims the second part of the Fair. On its conclusion three cheers are given; there is a moment's silence, then, very softly, the Band plays "Auld Lang Syne," which the people join in singing—then in quickstep the Procession moves off, once more up the Kirkwynd, and along the old Drove Road to the Kilngreen, where the last sods are cut and Langholm's Rights are again preserved against all encroachments.

Then the sports begin. The first event is the Cornet's Chase. The Cornet, carrying the Flag, is given a fair start, and at a given signal his followers are away in pursuit, a lingering suggestion of the old days of Border raiding making this event a popular one. The rest of the day is spent in horse-racing and other Border games of the past, wrestling, running, and leaping. Though these races date only from 1816, Langholm was a prominent centre of horse-racing in the old days of Border warfare. It was at a race meeting here that the plans for the release of Kinmont Willie were made by Buccleuch and his dauntless men in 1596.

Towards evening, when the sports are over and the sun is slowly sinking behind the hills in the west, the lads and lassies repair to the enclosure where the wrestling contests have been held earlier in the day, and dancing is kept up with spirit and enjoyment almost until the darkness has settled down on hill and vale. Then the Cornet lifts his flag, marshals his thinned forces around him, and leads the way back to the Town Hall, there to deliver up to the Provost the standard he received from him twelve hours before. Once more the Bands play "Auld Lang Syne"; at intervals dancing is indulged in, until at last darkness has fallen, and the Common-Riding is over for another year.

#### THE COMMON-RIDING—AN IMPRESSION.

Long, long years have passed; many a flood has swept beneath Langholm Bridge; many a time the heather has bloomed at the Round House since we saw the Common-Riding. But, like all Langholm folk, we return

some golden Summer Fair night and await the morrow with mingled feelings—memories which are sensitive, which fill us with the old hope of boyhood ; anticipations of the Day ; wonder as to whom we shall see—the Common-Riding airs meanwhile humming themselves in our soul.

What a morning ! Warbla top is clear, and on the Peat Road the lark already is a “ sightless song.” A lovely freshness breathes from the cool hills, and in the Stubholm wood a heavy dew lies on the grass. Out by Scott’s Knowe there is a sound of the mower,—some one hastening to get his work done early, against the crying of the Fair. How charming is “ The Langholm ” on such a morning ! Soon the glory of the heather over at Castle Craigs will be dimmed ; soon the bracken on Warbla will be brown ; soon the great beech trees by Glenfirra will be shaking off their withered leaves ; soon all the visitors will have gone, and the rainy days have come when Langholm will be very quiet ; but To-day is the Common-Riding Day, the gayest of all the year, and—Ah ! the sound of fife and drum—the Common-Riding has begun ! Musical critics may find defects in this introduction of the Day ; they may refer to a lack of balance and a preponderance of the drum—but we have heart for no such cynicism. To one who was once a boy in Langholm, there is not in all the wide world anything *quite* the same as the strains of the Flute Band on the Common-Riding morning ! Changes must have come, we suppose, but to us the players look to be just the same men whom we were wont to see many long years ago. . . . We follow them to the “ Dog Trail.” We do not



now care which dog wins the race : yet thirty years ago it was a matter of life and death to us—we felt that if “Rattler” did not win, all the joy of life would be clouded over. But since that far-off day genuine Care has placed the Trail and “Rattler” in their proper perspective.

Now we are in the old Market Place. What a crowd! How many “kenned faces!” There is auld John Ir’in selling Proclamations—here is Willie Dick. We were never in the habit of shaking hands with Willie, but we do so to-day—it is the Common-Riding, and he is a man of tremendous importance this forenoon. What would have happened, we wonder, had some irreverent youth ever sought to carry that Spade? We still secretly hope Willie will dash through Ewes as he did long ago—but hark! the Langholm Band is coming; it is playing “Craigie Lea,” and we silently fall in and follow them round the Pump in the Square. On the Brig the air is changed to “O’ a’ the Airts.” Lads and lassies, now laughing and blithesome because it is the Common-Riding Day, who have not yet built up memories, are, unknown to themselves, absorbing food for wonderful recollections in days to come, when they will have gone far beyond those heathery hills when, in some big town, or on some distant shore, there will surge in their hearts that over-mastering longing for their “ain fouk” which ought to come to every one of us. We have all felt it, and when we return home and miss the old faces . . . . Yes, this last thought has been induced by the change made by the Band; they are now playing “The Flowers o’ the Forest Are A’ Wede Awae,” and



in the panorama of the years we see many dear familiar faces, now "cauld in the clay," who on a far-off summer's morning heard the Fair cried at the Cross.

There ! the Cornet and his men are off to the Hill, and as the Flag flutters up the old Kirkwynd with the horsemen following, our pulses are stirred by yet another emotion — are not these men Armstrongs, Elliots, Beatties, Irvings, Littles, and Scotts ? and thus, surely, it must have been that the clans "ran their horse on the Langholm Holm" as they cantered on their way to Carlinrig, and thus that they raced to Carlisle Castle to the release of Kinmont Willie.

See ! John Ir'in is mounting the grey horse now, and we note with a pang how frail he is growing. The Market Place is crowded : Langholm as it is and Langholm as it was meet to-day and tell their separate stories. Old school-fellows, who shared with us the toffee and the tawse, whom we have not seen for many years, are in the throng. There is Sandie Dodd — we have not seen him since his campaign in Afghanistan. He was with Roberts in the glorious march to Kandahar. Now he is marching after the Langholm Band, with a brighter eye than he had on that famous march. Years ago we walked near him in the Procession. We bought our "canes" at the same time at Jamie Edinbro's, for our local prejudice was so strong even then that we gave preferential treatment to Jamie over Benson who came from the English side. Now we watch the bairns waving their besoms—but surely at those far-off Common-Ridings the heather was in fuller bloom than it is to-day ! There were no new threepenny pieces for the boys then—

what a godsend one would have been ! Fancy one's savings suddenly rising from fourpence to sevenpence ! Once, by rigid, self-denial on many a Saturday, we saved ninepence in coppers, but alas ! ere yet the Cornet's Chase was run we had lost a penny of it in a reckless gamble at the cocoa-nut stall ! We smile at the bairns now ; we are at the top of the Brae of Life and are looking back ; they, God bless them, are just beginning the climbing ; and they wave their heather-besoms in a sheer ecstasy of delight—for it is the Common-Riding Day. But John demands "seelence," and we wish not to lose one word of his old Scots tongue, so pure, so unaffected, so absolutely lacking in nippy English words. He "cries the Fair" as ably as he did 20 years ago. To us John is the personification of the Common-Riding. Take away him and Willie Dick, and perhaps Sam McMillan, and what would the Common-Riding be like ?

John's work is over. A strange quiet falls upon the holiday crowd ; it lasts but a moment ; from the bottom of the Kirkwynd the Band plays, low and slow, the old, old air, "Auld Lang Syne," and in a swift rush of Memory we think of childhood, boyhood, the long summer days, the old home and the kindly eyes, the whitewashed cottages, where many a blithe smile would welcome us ; we remember, too, the mint and southernwood of the Sabbath morning, and the 'kirk bell, and the dreams of youth, of love and friendship, of wealth and fame, and high hopes and merry boyish hearts—and the Band is well into the Drove Road ere we awake from our half-pleasant, half-regretful reverie.



PROCLAMATION OF THE FAIR, 1882

We see the sod turned at the Bar, see Willie Dick go through Ewes, as he did many years ago, see the Cornet's Chase, indulge in brandy-snaps and coolers, and sandwiches and mustard in the wrestling ring. We cannot now risk the toffee on the stands, but we visit them for auld lang syne's sake, and buy "fairings" for the bairns, nuts and jumping-jacks and sweeties. All the slumbrous afternoon we wander about the Castle Holm, meeting old friends, admiring the beautiful scenery, breathing deeply of the Eskdale air, so much purer and caller than that of the stifling town.

But slowly the darkness falls. Clouds of crimson and gold have been spread over the top of the Timpen all the time of the dancing, but now the colours have changed to grey and blue. The Cornet brings up his horse, again gathers his men about him, now a straggling and thinner array, and they march slowly townward, as one can fancy the few dalesmen returning to the Forests on the night that followed Flodden. The only air now played is "Auld Lang Syne"—it is the evening tune; "O' a' the Airts" is for the morning. Another memory has been added to the Past, and it will make the recollections of long-gone years sharper and more vivid still.

There is the new moon on Warbla—hanging lazily over the Resting Knowe, where, oft and oft, on similar nights it has been seen by our hallowed Dead, who, unconscious of this being the Common-Riding Day, sleep amid the shadows in Wauchope, and hear not the hoolet cry from the darkening beech gently moving in the night wind.

## CHAPTER XV.

### OUR HIGH DAYS.

IN addition to what has already been described there was in connection with the Common-Riding a large amount of broad humour and boisterous fun. The Proclamation of the Fair indicates that it was held "for the space o' aucht days and upwards," and counting in the period of our eager anticipation and that of our more chastened retrospect, the excitement lasted even longer than the prescribed period, and when, perhaps, we saw one of our "drouthy" friends taking the width of the roadway we smiled, and remarked that "he's still hadden the Fair."

Until quite a recent date the Langholm Fair, which was for lambs and wool, was one of the largest in Scotland,\* there being sometimes as many as 30,000 lambs for sale. A very stirring sight it was, and one accompanied with much noise—the bleating of the lambs mingling with the fun of the Fair. The town was crowded with strangers. Farmers from all over the Borders came on business, and not a showman or tumbler, huckster or sweetie vendor within twenty miles of the town but came to Langholm Summer Fair and Common-Riding. Every cottage in the town was white-washed and painted afresh, and not a street hawker in

\* See *Langholm As It Was*, pp. 528-535.

Carlisle but, in prospect of the great event, augmented his stock of jumping-jacks and brandy snaps.

Among the young folk of the district the Fair was a time of jollity and excitement. The lassies had a song which they gaily sang on the eve of the event :—

“The morn's the Fair  
And I shall be there  
To see my lad  
With the curly hair.”

This rhyme, I think, was not peculiar to Eskdale, but with certain variations was common in other places in the south of Scotland and north of England. The Eskdale lassies, I fancy, must have been always light-hearted and musical, for David Barbour tells how not a battle was won by their fathers, brothers, and lovers, but the—

“Young women, when thai will play  
Syng it among thaim ilk day.”

And so they lightly sang of the coming Fair.

For two or three days before the Fair, which, by statute, was held “on the 15th day o' Jul'y, auld style,” the roads leading to Langholm were made picturesque and vocal by immense droves of lambs, whilst the hills and sheepfolds echoed with the plaintive lament accompanying the separation of the lambs from their mothers.

In the town itself the scene was a stirring one. Accounts were generally settled at the Fair; new clothes were ordered; the farmer bought his new scythes and hay-rakes, and his wife her new bonnet; and every servant lass received her “fairing” in ribbons, gingerbread, or mint drops. Public houses were full to overflowing; we had then no Forbes-Mackenzie Act to

compel the closing of licensed houses, and often the night between the Summer Fair and the Common-Riding was spent entirely in revelry and dancing—and in honesty I ought to add—in fighting.

We boys regarded the Fair as a fitting preparation for the Common-Riding. We expected to earn then sufficient to free the latter event from financial worry. This achievement was only made possible by the amateur herding of the droves of lambs which were brought to the Fair. Our work was enthusiastically performed, sometimes, indeed, if I may borrow a phrase from Mr. Micawber, "we were urged with imprecations to desist." I have often heard my father tell the story of that Fair time, in the very year, I believe, that Trafalgar was fought, when he had measles—a very serious affliction at that particular season. He told how he lay listening to the bleating of the lambs and the barking of the dogs and the shouts of the boys, as the flocks passed up the street, until the torture of it became unendurable to him. Judging by the silence that his mother was not near, he got up, slipped on his clothes, and in a few moments was running as well as his weakness allowed, down the back street to the house of his boon companion Jock McRae, who of course was in bed with the same ailment. As luck would have it Jock's mother was out at the Pump, and appeared to be detained there by some special piece of gossip. Jock had therefore time to dress, listening meanwhile to the plan proposed by my father. The scheme commended itself to his judgment, and off they set to the herding and soon got sixpenny jobs.



Naturally, when their absence was noticed, a great hue and cry was raised. The whole "gate-end" was excited, and doleful were the prophecies as to what would follow their being out "wi' the missles on them." "The boys 'll never leeve Nannie," was the comforting view unanimously expressed to my grandmother. Search parties were soon organised, and with an acute instinct they made for the fair-steading on the Bushy Braes. Detection, even in such a crowd, was a simple matter, for apart from the fact that their faces, all spotted with measles, betrayed them, they in their hurry had forgotten to divest themselves of their Kilmarnock night-caps--"pirnies" we called them—which even boys then wore. Each was quickly rolled in a blanket, hurried home and put to bed, but, despite the gloomy predictions of the auld-wives, neither my father nor Jock suffered the slightest inconvenience.

As might be expected, pocket-picking was much practised on those Fair days. And it took no great skill in the dexterous art to pick the pocket of a drunken farmer, who had probably celebrated the sale of his lambs not wisely but too well. Davie Haggart, a notorious thief, always came, and he used to boast that the best haul he ever made was at the Langholm Fair, when he relieved a farmer of some £80. Having secured his booty, Davie hired a post-chaise, and was well on the road to Annan before the theft was discovered. He was hanged at last for killing a warder in Dumfries Jail, and after his condemnation he wrote a sketch of his life, in which he made the statement I have just given.

A great feature of the Fair was the enormous number



of tents on the Little Kilngreen, and of course all of them were kept up for the Common-Riding, always held on the following day. Most of these tents displayed some kind of sign-board, and one I remember, called "The Gretna Wedding Inn," was kept by one Tom the Piper—"tae gae them music was his charge." There was a part of the tent curtained off, where Tom, who claimed to be one of the Gretna "priests," was willing, for a very reasonable fee, to unite in wedlock any who so desired. Tom did the marrying in quite a business-like way, and without any extra fee gave the happy pair their "wedding lines"—which, all things considered, was a very discreet act—especially from the point of view of the lady.

I once saw a marriage in Tom's tent. Imagine the place crowded with half-drunken men. A young woman pushes her way to the front, half dragging a hesitating swain. She is not, on this her wedding day, carrying a bouquet of fragrant flowers or white heather, but as she elbows her way up to Tom she is eating a thick slice of gingerbread, which, perhaps, though it is not exactly elegant, is not to be wondered at, considering her early breakfast and long tramp to the Fair. Tom puts the usual questions, and these being answered just about as coherently as if the man had been sober, he declares them married persons, and gives the bride her "lines," which, probably, with an eye to the future, she is eager to have, and which she deposits in her bodice along with what remains of the gingerbread. The choral part of the solemn service is contributed by a group of ill-tempered collie dogs, barking or howling

at the absence of their masters, who are within the inner tent as witnesses. The music provided by the dogs is accompanied by the vocal efforts of a half-intoxicated ploughman, who appropriately enough is singing "The Gowden Locks of Anna"—a sentimental song highly popular in those days. The bridal reception is held at a sweetie stall, where the best man presents the blushing, and I suppose happy, bride with a lavish supply of mint-drops, whilst another friend gives her a few sticks of what we called "black-jock," a tough but popular confection at such festive gatherings.

Of course the Common-Riding was not always a day of unmixed hilarity. If the day was wet much of the pleasure was absent, but strange to say this seldom happens. A notable exception was in 1846—still remembered in Eskdale as the year of "the thunnery Common-Riding." I have a vivid recollection of this terrible storm, and I do not remember any which has excelled it. In July 1874 a terrific thunderstorm broke over Langholm and lasted many hours, but on this occasion the floods were nothing like those of 1846. It was said that if the same quantity of rain which fell on the east of Whita Hill—that is the side sloping down into Tarras Water,—had fallen on the west side, the town of Langholm would have been completely washed away. The Esk was in high flood. To use a favourite phrase of auld Charlie Hope it was "juist rowing (rolling) atween bank and brae." But Tarras Water, its tributary, ran right through it and did considerable damage to its far bank. The rush of water swept a man off the Kilngreen, and his body was never found. Another man was killed by lightning

in Tarras—a brother, I believe, of the poacher I have mentioned on page 130.

For a few days after the Common-Riding we found it difficult to settle down to our work again, and would, perhaps, finish the festivities by excursions—drives and the like. I remember arranging with a relative to go in the early morning of the day after a Common-Riding to Dumfries, where there was some special function taking place,—a Burns celebration I think it was,—and he and I decided to drive over to Kirtlebridge and there get the train. We left early, and when we got to about Besse Bell's Brae the dawn broke. I then saw that my friend's face was far from clean, and had a strange, smeared appearance. At last I said to him, "Jamie, are ye aware that ye've come away wi' a vera dirty face?" "Eh?" he said worriedly, giving it a rub over with his hand meanwhile, "is't awfu' bad? The fact is A' couldna fin' a towel, and as A' did'na want to disturb the hoose I juist used yesterday's *Scotsman*." However, we got most of the printer's ink off when we reached the Blough Burn.

#### HIRING DAYS.

From the standpoint of fun and frolic the Hiring-days were second only to the Common-Riding. The hirings were mostly for farm servants, so country folk flocked into the town in large numbers. The works and schools had holiday in the afternoon, by which time it was only with difficulty that one could get "doon the toon." There were stalls of all descriptions, stretching in unbroken rows from the Cross up almost to the Town-

head. The Pot-Market was filled with shoemakers and crockery vendors. An enormous trade was done both in their goods and also in clothing, as the country folk had seldom an opportunity of replenishing their homes. The shoemakers had two grades of shoes—one called “customers’ shoes,” made from the best part of the hide, and the other called “market shoes,” made from the inferior parts. The fitting followed somewhat after the method adopted by Tommy Wilson, the tailor. Country people would produce a stick as the standard, and if the boots afterwards nipped—well, it was just what one expected in Sunday clothes generally. Hiring-days served many another purpose. It was told of a herd from “the far side”—that is over about Liddesdale or Bewcastle—that when, one Whitsun Hiring, he seated himself in the barber’s chair for “a clip,” as he styled it, that worthy, surveying the hair, drily remarked: “Gey lang this time.” “Aye,” said the herd laconically, “A’ didna get in at Martinmas.”

I may digress here to say that our barber was, as might be expected, one of the institutions of the town. As well as barber, he was the general utility man, and it was claimed on his behalf that he never turned away any job as being beyond his skill—umbrellas, watches, locks, or anything else. A man of shrewd observation, too, and gifted with a characteristic humour. His sayings were current coin among us,<sup>1</sup> but I have always thought that his most spontaneous hit was his remark to a young minister who visited the town one summer. The minister had the previous day hired a “machine” from one of the inns, and being up early

next morning to catch our splendid morning air, he strolled down the town, thinking to settle up with the innkeeper. Of course the inn did not open until eight o'clock, but it still wanted some twenty minutes of the hour when the minister was hammering on the front door to obtain attention. It was at this precise moment that our barber sauntered past on his usual morning walk. He stood a moment, apparently reflecting, whilst the minister knocked again, and then he remarked sympathetically, "It'll no dae, my man, ye canna get a dram at this time o' the morning!" The minister called again.

In the High Street were stalls laden with all manner of goods—Birmingham products which brought great delight into many a cot-house, where the supply of toys was limited, Sheffield goods, medicines, confectionery, laces, and ribbons galore,—what a sight it was! From one or other of the stalls, every shepherd or ploughman,—aye, and every Langholm lad, too,—bought his sweetheart her "fairing," an attention that was tantamount to a formal proposal. But what I could never quite understand was why these love-gifts should so generally take the form of ginger-bread. Secondhand booksellers, coopers, jugglers, tumblers, men selling the songs they were singing, and over and above all, Jamie Dyer with his fiddle,—these were a few of the sights which filled five parishes with gaiety and excitement.

#### JAMIE DYER.

No Hiring-day would have been quite complete without Jamie. He bore the same relation thereto as Hawick Wattie did to the Common-Riding. We had a feeling

that it was only when these worthies were safely into Langholm High Street that the great event was actually here. He was a native of Carlisle—born on the Christmas Eve of 1841, ---and those who remember him will



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JAMIE DYER.

fully appreciate his mother's claim that he came "as a little angel sent down from Heaven to cheer his mother."

There was a rhyme one often heard that

“Jamie Dyer’s wedding day  
Was on the Langholm Hiring-day.”

This would, no doubt, be a coincidence agreeable to Langholm folk, but my own opinion was that Jamie skilfully adapted his couplet to the particular Fair he was attending. His description of his own music was that it was “harmonious and sympathetic,” but it is not necessary for me to discuss Jamie’s claim. He was one of the professional beggars of our Borderland. I do not mean by this that he was one of those tramps whom Johnie Weave girmed at and called “lazy scoondrels,” and whom Bet Moray, who kept the popular “sweetie” shop in High Street, referred to as “impudent dirty,” but rather that he could fill the part which was demanded of every “beggar,”—that is, he could sing, or fiddle, or recite, or tell a good story, after the manner of the ancient minstrel. Thus of a winter’s night, round the blazing peat fire, he would entertain a whole farm-town. We had many such men travelling throughout the Borders, a famous one being Johnie Douglas, the well known “Ettrick Beggar,” whose constituency embraced Ettrick, Teviotdale, Annandale, and Eskdale. These itinerant minstrels were eagerly welcomed and well entertained in country places, and Jamie Dyer was one of the last of them.

ISAAC FLETCHER.

Then we had Isaac Fletcher from Ecclefechan, his hat gaily decked with pheasant or peacock feathers. Isaac was another of the institutions of the Hiring-day. We

saw these visitors in the street or on the Kilngreen, but their entering in and their going out were unobserved. When precisely they left the town, or what was the manner of their going, no one seemed clearly to know.



ISAAC FLETCHER.

Their departure was generally by night, and when Langholm awoke they, like the swallows from the kirk rigging, had ta'en their flight.

Of a different class were Wull and Mary Kennedy, who also included Langholm in their rounds. They



were among the last of the genuine gipsies who roamed about the Border land. Basket-making was their occupation, and one of our most familiar sights about the Fair time was Wull Kennedy hanging about with a half-made basket slung across his back, whilst Mary, his half-witted sister, slouched a dozen yards behind him. "Daft" we said Mary was, and mothers frightened their bairns with a threat that "daft Mary Kennedy 'll get ye."

When in Langholm the Kennedys often consorted with the Hutchinsons, another curious group of gipsies, and also basket-makers. They occupied the cottage on the extreme left of the picture given on page 54, and a rough abode they made it. It was perhaps the last cottage in the town to retain the earthen floor, and the boys of the neighbourhood voluntarily repaired it from the mud of the roadway or the hedge row. Among this family were three old women, all of whom smoked short, and very black, clay pipes. We always doubted whether these various members were in any way related, but one of them at least was a genuine gipsy.

#### DANCING.

When the business of the day was over,—and a rough, uncouth business I often thought it was, which compelled a young woman before being hired, to stand an inspection by a half-tipsy farmer, who discussed her fitness for her work with a circle of his ill-tongued associates—a rush was made to the public-houses or to the ball rooms, where very soon the fun was fast and furious. Fiddlers belonging to Langholm or some near

town, would hire a ball room and charge perhaps a penny for so many dances. They generally brought with them a burly assistant to serve as a door-keeper, and his services were frequently required, for boys possessed then, as they do now, that guileless instinct which prefers getting into a circus by crawling under the canvas rather than by paying or having the legitimate charge paid for them. We did not grudge the penny for these "crushes," as I see Society balls are now termed—a phrase which always suggested to my provincial mind a Langholm Hiring-day dance—, we simply considered it more exciting to get in without paying. The inevitable result was a conflict between us and the "chuckers-out" as we called them. We did not object to the action of these gentlemen, but on reflection I now see that their methods were lacking in gentleness, and that they could easily have accomplished their duties with a greater respect for our clothes—and, perhaps, for our bones also.

The dancing was an exciting business, requiring not only skill but courage, and there was no idea among us of its being "the poetry of motion." At the top of the room auld Jamie "Average" would be engaged dancing the "Half-cut" or the "Highland Fling," whilst a little apart a big awkward ploughman, securely hid from the criticism of the crowd, would be attempting the "Double-Shuffle." Order was maintained somewhat indifferently by specially appointed constables. It was a playful little habit of these worthies to get drunk early in the day, so that they were really out of action before the serious work of the afternoon and night began.

Owing to this amiable weakness they were required to report themselves at intervals to a specially appointed overseer. Probably this was a local draper, who was far too busy measuring out calico or ribbon to make a careful investigation into the condition of the constable. "Aye, ye'll dae," he would say when the latter put his head within the shop door, and having passed the censor, off the constable would go to his favourite bar.

Our permanent constable was John Boyd, who himself was quite a "character." The following incident will serve to illustrate how John maintained public order :—

Down in the Straits there lived a decent man, who, by industry and frugality, had made a modest little competency. He had two or three daughters, each of whom strangely enough made an unfortunate marriage, and their father, old Davie, had practically to maintain the whole connection. He was wont to say, with some bitterness, that his sons-in-law were so hopelessly lazy, that "if he pat the breed into their mooth they couldna be bothered to chow't !" But this disinclination did not extend to beverages. Very seldom could any of them pass our test of sobriety—to say quickly, "there was a drove o' paitridges flew owre Auchenrivock rigging." They lived on Davie's means, yet were never content with what he did for them. One of them Sandie—, a great, powerful fellow, one of the notorious fighting men of Langholm, who in his early life had been in the army,—varied his drinking by going down to Davie's house and playfully discharging a gun through his window, to the great alarm of the inmates. Davie

applied for protection to the Sheriff, who sent his officer to arrange with the local constable, John Boyd, to have Sandie arrested. The two officers hid themselves at the head of the Gas Entry and hoped to seize Sandie as he made for Davie's house. Presently they saw him coming down the Brewery Brae flourishing his gun and declaring what he would do to Davie.

"Now, Boyd," said the Sheriff's officer, "now's your chance."

"Oh, no," said the constable, "ye maun arrest him,—A'll help ye—get at him now."

"No, no, Boyd, it's your duty,—A'll back ye up."

And in this strain they argued, in honour preferring one another, until Sandie was past and well on his way up the Straits. He would fire his gun as usual, and as he returned, the same dispute arose and continued until Sandie had disappeared along the Drove Road. When Sandie died, a local poet broke forth into a lament—"Poor Sandie—, I'm wae thou's gane!" but the sorrow was not general, and auld Davie bore the dispensation of Providence with considerable fortitude.

#### ROUPS.

These Hiring-days were always utilized by the auctioneers for the holding of "roups,"—events which always excited a keen interest, and occasionally no little rivalry. Old Jean Beattie had an antiquated bonnet which we never saw except at a sale. Lantie Armstrong named it "the roup bonnet," and when we saw it we knew that Jean meant business. It was of regulation pattern, but sadly required re-smoking. When going to

a roup Jean never tied the bonnet strings, but let them hang negligently down, and one got the delicate suggestion that she had just hastily donned the bonnet and dropped in for a moment or two. But that was not so. Jean had had that roup in view for many days, and was there on serious business bent. Not that she bought much, but she had the satisfaction of knowing what other women bought. If Jean had been given the choice she would have instantly preferred a roup to either the theatre or a tea-meeting. But she was not often required to make so momentous a decision.

One of the most agreeable incidents I remember to have seen was when my father went to a "roup" and zealously ran up the price for some article to a ridiculous figure, stimulated thereto by someone on the outskirts of the crowd who was excitedly bidding against him. When at last it fell to his bid, Tom McVittie, his brother-in-law, gently broke the news to him that he had been bidding against his own wife! My father's subdued demeanour during the rest of that day greatly impressed us all. The "bar-rouping" was also an annual event of almost first-class importance in Langholm. Then the toll-bars were let to the highest bidder, and there was considerable competition for them.

#### HALLOW-E'EN.

This was always a great night in the country districts of Scotland. In his well known and inimitable poem Burns has described its celebration, and after his description little else need be said, save that his picture reflected also the customs in Eskdale.

In Langholm the Hallow - E'en celebrations were usually varied by what were popularly termed "taffy-joins." Very jolly and hilarious events they were! The toffee was usually of the treacle variety, and therefore a very considerable length of time was needed to consume the concoction.

The fun was not confined to the inside of the house. The boys and irresponsible youths of the district soon got knowledge of the fact and duly expended a wonderful amount of patience in endeavouring to pitch sods down the "lum." This was not very difficult as the chimneys were wide and straight, and not infrequently a sod would splash into the boiling toffee, much to the irritation of the gude-wife and the chagrin of the young people, who, however, joyfully ate the toffee whether it was flavoured with sods or not. Chase would be given after the raiders, which of course all added to the fun.

The story of Yid Gambie's "taffy-join" has often been told in Langholm. The toffee had been made without any such regrettable incident as I have just mentioned, and it was dished and set out in the hall—we called it "the entry,"—to cool, Yid meanwhile favouring the company with a song. It was at this moment that some of the youths raided the entry and carried off the tins of luscious toffee, leaving not a trace behind. On the completion of Yid's song one of the impatient spirits called out, "Now for the taffy!" and it was then that the diabolical outrage was discovered. Feeling in the neighbourhood was considerably strained for some weeks afterwards.

Next to the Common-Riding, the New Year was,

perhaps, our time of greatest enjoyment. In conformity to the Scots practice since the Reformation, we entirely ignored Christmas, but at the New Year we were amply compensated for this abstention. The festivities began on Hogmanay Day, December 31st, which was generally regarded as the children's day. After my boyhood, the custom came into prominence of rising in the early hours of Hogmanay morning to welcome the day with the rattle of tin cans. Whether this, like most of the other celebrations of the day, was of pagan origin, I do not know, possibly it was, but it obtained an immense popularity among the boys for a generation or so. The demonstration began about two o'clock and continued until about six. The trailing of the cans was accompanied by a continuous chorus of "Hogmanay, Hogmanay," varied by an old folk-rhyme which was recited by the bairns when they went "hogmanaying:"

"Get up, auld wife, and shake yer feathers,  
Ye needna think that we're a wheen beggars,  
We're only some bits o' bairns come oot to play—  
Get up—and gie's oor hogmanay.  
Hogmanay—hogman-ick,  
Hang the baker owre the stick,  
When the stick begins to break,  
Take another and break his back!"

The moral of the lines is somewhat obscure, but as one does not examine the grammar of a ballad, so my critical readers must not demand explanations of this old Hogmanay rhyme.

The hogmanaying began soon after breakfast and continued until midday. The practice, which I believe was also a survival of an old pagan custom, ranking with the giving of Christmas presents in other countries,



was for young children to visit the houses of their relations or others from whom they had received invitations, where they were given presents of cake, oranges, and the like, and sometimes money. In my young days oatmeal cakes and cheese were given as "hogmanay," but gradually these were superseded by more tasty delicacies. In some places a hooped penny was given; and here I may say the custom of giving a crooked sixpence as a keepsake was common in my youth, but, like so many other good old usages, has long ago fallen into disuse. I remember an attempt being made by some excellent but tactless people to turn this old Hogmanay custom to religious purposes by substituting tracts for oranges—texts for pennies. I need hardly say that the effort ended in dismal and well deserved failure. All that Hogmanay Day the streets of Langholm were fluttering and strewn with tracts of a sound and elevating character. The experiment was never repeated, and the privileges of youth were happily preserved intact.

On Hogmanay night many festivities were indulged in. Many weddings were fixed for that night, and as the old year was slowly dying, a large crowd gathered at the Cross, where a huge bonfire was lighted to welcome its successor, another relic of the celebrations of our prehistoric forefathers. As soon as the town clock had struck the midnight hour first-footing began; but as this and other customs of the New Year are still observed, it is unnecessary that I should allude to them farther. On looking back, however, I think there was in those days much more visiting on New



Year's Day than now. Companies went about the whole day long calling at the houses of acquaintances to wish them, not a "happy," but "a guid New Year." Of course this could only be effectively done by "tasting," and it was the correct thing to offer shortbread with the whisky. Ginger cordial and lime juice had not then been thought of as aids to conviviality.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### WINE AND WATER.

ONE of the features of Langholm as it was in my younger days was the number of its inns. It will be remembered that there were not then the same limits to the sale of drink as happily we have to-day. When I compare then and now I am agreeably impressed with the marvellous improvement there has been in the habits of all classes of the community. Some letters in my possession give a glimpse into the social life of Langholm towards the end of the eighteenth century, and the picture, I must confess, is not very attractive. Rude of manner, wild in temper, turbulent and unruly, the people appear to have been. When James Haldane, the famous evangelist, visited the town in 1798 on one of his preaching tours, he was mobbed and threatened. He preached from the steps of Archbald Little's house—"Bauldy Steps,"\* they were always called,—and his preaching seems to have aroused very serious opposition. A similar experience befell the Rev. Rowland Hill, when he visited Langholm during one of his famous evangelistic missions in Scotland. Unfortunately, he arrived the night before the Summer Fair, when the unruly elements from half a dozen parishes had congregated in the town, and I fear we cannot even take refuge in

\* See illustration on page 49.

Johnie Weave's invariable excuse for any disturbance in Langholm, that it was due to "them Hawick folk." I have heard it said that on their return from Waterloo, the Scots Greys, or at least "all that was left of them," passed through Langholm on the eve of the Summer Fair. It was their first visit to Scottish soil after the campaign, and the colonel evidently feared the effect of the Fair upon his men, for he suddenly determined to push onward, and the Greys marched off on the Summer Fair morning.

This roughness and turbulence had not wholly died out in my early years, and on looking back what an improvement I now see! It was then considered excusable, if not actually commendable, even for the respectable members of the community to drink to excess. The man who refrained was "a puir weak body." Men sat down with the avowed intention of becoming drunk, and even elders of the kirk thought it no reflection on their profession to indulge even as did other men who were in less exalted stations. I myself have seen elders go home drunk between the Fast Day and the Sacrament, and then appear with the elements on the Communion Sabbath. I admit that this was exceptional, but the fact of its having been seen once indicates how low was the general standard which then prevailed in this matter of drinking.

#### WINE.

We had in Langholm some 25 houses which were all dignified with the name of inn, and in most, if not all, of them, refreshment could certainly be had. But in

addition there was a large number of "dram-shops," where drink could be obtained in plenty, but which made no pretence of offering any other accommodation or refreshment. The licence cost only a small sum, and even this was often evaded. Along the country road sides there were private houses where whisky could generally be bought by any well known customer. The practice was to buy a cake, say, for threepence, when it suddenly occurred to the gude-wife that it alone was but a drysome meal, and she very thoughtfully provided something wherewith to wash it down—against the protestations of the traveller! It was a simple and beautiful illustration of how the proverbial coach and four can be driven through an Act of Parliament.

#### INN PARLOURS.

But I do not wish it to be thought that these old inns were merely drinking dens. Most of them were highly respectable houses of entertainment, and many of them were necessary, because of the fact that travelling was then all done by road. Much of the mirth and gaiety of Langholm had its origin in their cosy parlours, and of an evening wit and humour flowed as freely as the wine. Large companies, constituting informal clubs, assembled stately in one or other of the parlours, and the jokes and witticisms passed into our current conversation. In one of these select companies a man, whom I knew very intimately occupied an acknowledged position as humorist. I was not a member of that convivial band, but I generally heard the latest story or joke which originated among them, and here, I may say, all these

stories and jokes were perfectly clean. No man would have been tolerated who ventured an anecdote which conveyed any double meaning. After his third dram my acquaintance was seen at his best. It took three—two, he said, “didna’ even warm him!” As the company ceased laughing at one of his efforts, one of them slapped his knee in a burst of admiration, declaring, “Man, Jamie, ye’re the best man that was ever made!” “Eh?” the humorist asked, gratified, though a trifle surprised, at the comparison, “Better than Moses, and Jacob, and Dainiel, and a’ yon lot?”

In the parlours all kinds of absurd practical jokes were planned. One of these, though it made us laugh for a few days, nearly ended in a disaster. A local worthy had long nursed an ambition to fly. In pondering over the matter he became certain it could be done by some mechanical appliances he had made. One night, in a moment of exaltation in the inn snuggerly, he propounded the scheme to his cronies, who warmly commended his enterprise. An adjournment was made to his own garden where his “wing” theory could be put to the test. It was arranged that he should mount an apple tree as far up as he could get, and then one of the company would “shoo” him off at the appointed moment.

“Shoo! Mr. Martin,” cried the starter, and Mr. Martin “shoo’d.” When they gathered him up they found that, in addition to various minor bruises, he had sustained a bad fracture of the leg, which confined him to the solid earth for a matter of six or seven weeks. When he recovered, his ambition did not soar quite so high.

But I would not like it to be thought that the inn parlours were only drinking places. Nothing could be farther from the fact. It must be remembered that apart from the Cross, the Mill-end, or the street corners, the inn was the only meeting place in the town. The company which assembled there almost nightly met, not to drink, though of course there were exceptions, but for social fellowship, political discussion, and such-like purposes. Wit flowed with the wine no doubt, but the associations were entirely separate from the idea of the modern drinking bar. Langholm men who had gone out into the world,—“doon into England,” we generally termed it,—revisiting the town, were sure to repair to one or other of the inn parlours to taste again our genuine native humour. As a rule we gave a cordial welcome to those who came back to see “the auld folks at hame,” but we were very jealous of and deeply resented the airs of superiority assumed by some youths, whose humble parents every one of us knew. And frankly, we thought all the better of a youth who left his English tongue at the Cross Keys or the Riddings. When Tommy Kerr’s son returned from a stay of only a few months in Carlisle, he spoke a tongue which none of us could quite identify, but we made out in answer to our enquiries as to his health that he was “pretty tidy,” instead of “gey weel,” or “no sae bad,” or “muckle about it,” which were our usual ways of admitting that we were in perfect health. Youths of this type got themselves laughed at even as they do to-day. We got no little fun from men who, having risen in the world, forgot the pit from whence they had been dug and the rock from which they

had been hewn, and strutted about in ridiculous pomposity, but we gave honour to our Langholm boys who went out into the great world and succeeded and yet bore themselves modestly and discreetly. A London bank-manager, noticing how frequently Langholm was given as the birth-place of applicants for posts, enquired whether in Langholm we bred anything else than bank clerks? And we were proud to think of the part taken by these and others in the business life of our large towns. But we admired common-sense and filial feeling more than the ability to make money.

Everybody in Langholm knew the story of the young man who had been away in some big town for a time, and on his return had repaired to the Buck parlour where the old company was assembled, among them, of course, being Johnie Ca-pa, who had an irrepressible contempt for those who, being Langholm-born, affected to smile at our ways. The young man was carrying himself in a high and superior manner, and was slowly revealing his identity.

“Yes,” he said, “I’m a Langholm man myself.”

“Aye,” girmed Johnie, glaring at him, “A’ thocht A’ kenned them muckle feet.” But, nothing daunted, the youth held on his way. He admitted that Langholm was a nice place—in summer—but said that after being in other towns and seeing the manner of life there—no, he really did not think he could ever settle down here. “Weel,” said Johnie, biting and worrying at the words in his anger, “A’ dinna suppose we wad juist sen’ for ye.” It was no doubt very rude of Johnie to refer to the size of the visitor’s feet, but Langholm people

“allowed” the incident—that is, we thought the contemptible snobbery which would cause a son of Langholm to disparage the old town, deserved even the most personal rebuke.

I hope my brethren of the Craft will forgive my saying that at one period of its history Freemasonry in Langholm became closely associated in people’s minds with those scenes of conviviality in the inn parlours. I have for many years, since 1848, I believe, been an enthusiastic Mason, as were my fathers before me. From them and others I often heard stories told of the early years of Masonry in the town, and very amusing some of them were. It was perhaps unfortunate that the Craft was then so generally associated with the public house. A strong prejudice against it was thus created among the women of the town. Too often a wife would be kept waiting and watching, until far into the morning, for the return of the gude-man from the Masonic lodge, she meanwhile “nursing her wrath to keep it warm,” as did Tam o’ Shanter’s Kate. A friend of mine used to plead that to go to a meeting of the brethren was just about the same, in its moral effect, as going to the kirk. “Dae they get ony drink at the kirk?” was his wife’s reply, and without doubt it was unanswerable. I remember a convivial brother who lived in Manse Street going to one of the lodge dinners held at one of the inns. He was accustomed to the simplest fare at home, and though the drink alone would have produced little noticeable effect upon him, the unusual viands proved his undoing. Next day he was unable to go to work, and lay groaning in the grip of



a severe bilious attack. Jean, his wife, did not sit by bathing his fevered forehead with lavender water, but each time he groaned she just as surely gave utterance to the same uncharitable exclamation: "May the Lord increase yer trouble!" Such instances indicated that so far as Langholm was concerned, the bitterest enemy of Freemasonry was not the Pope of Rome but the wives of the brethren.

The drinking customs of the town were, however, undermined by the temperance movement in the early Sixties. In looking back now I can see how great was the change produced. Foremost in this excellent work were George Easton, a native of Ewes, and a platform orator of more than local repute; James McVittie, a Langholm man, poet, antiquary, author, and speaker, who exercised an enormous influence in the direction of a healthier and saner manhood; and my old friend Walter Scott of Holmfoot. The temperance movement in Langholm as elsewhere was ridiculed and misunderstood, but it soon showed "trophies" of its work well calculated to convince the greatest sceptic. To hear the packman tell in his Canonby vernacular of his former estate when he "drank the pack," and then of his new life, of which his own clothes would be pointed to as a graphic illustration, was enough to convince any man of the benefits of the movement. "Joining the total," as it was popularly called, was not always quite understood by its new adherents. When Mr. Scott handed Tommy Irvine his card of membership he also returned to him the fee of threepence, and Tommy called in at the Buck Inn on his way home and with the money regaled

himself with a "nip." Nannie Harper tried to bribe Davie to join by a promise that she would allow him threepence a week for beer. But these were exceptions.

#### SMUGGLING.

Smuggling, like poaching, was extensively practised, a large trade being done between Langholm and the country places. Not only was this illicit traffic carried on in spirits, but also in tobacco, and even in salt, upon which, as on all things else, there was then a heavy duty. Private distilling was done in many an innocent-looking spot. The sites chosen were usually where pure spring water could be obtained, and the hills afforded plenty of cover in case of a surprise. One of the difficulties of the manufacturers was that the smoke from the fire might betray its whereabouts, and so it came to pass that the operations were carried on at dead of night. It greatly helped in avoiding detection if the stills could be placed near a dwelling-house, and the smoke led into its kitchen chimney. The spirit thus distilled was carried about the country in bladders, and sold at much below the regular price. There was one small still known to exist in the immediate neighbourhood of Langholm—at Crawsknowe, high up on the side of Whita Hill. Here, excellent water for mixing or blending could be obtained from Whita Well, a clear, cool spring, intimately known to every Langholm man, and, even yet, of some repute in the distilling business.

#### A DRUNKEN COW.

One of the sons of the Crawsknowe family related to

me an amusing incident which occurred in connection with this secret still. They had a cow pasturing near the house, and it chanced to get hold of some wort, and consumed a considerable quantity of the stuff, which was well saturated with spirit. The result was that the cow got drunk—not helplessly so much as uproariously drunk. It got down upon its knees, then sprang into the air and raced about the field and indulged in a variety of uncow-like actions, bellowing terribly the while. Its strange and unwonted behaviour filled the people of the cottage with consternation. They concluded that the beast had gone mad. Their first care was to lock the door and look to the fastenings of the window, for a cow the worse of drink was a novelty, and not even the most experienced of them knew exactly how to deal with the situation. They deemed it safer, too, to get into the loft, where, having drawn the ladder up after them, they could await developments. After some weird antics, the noisy stage passed, and the animal settled down into a kind of drunken stupor. Next morning, following human precedent, the cow was dull and languid, suffering, without doubt, from the proverbial “sair heid.” The moral of the story then comes in—that never afterwards would that cow touch wort, nor even the cabbage plant called by this name. She seemed to suspect that, even in it, an insidious temptation lay concealed !

One day the excise officer,\* suspecting smuggling,

\* My friend, Mr. Simon Irving, of Langholm Mill, mentioned in a lecture delivered in Langholm, after the above notes were written, that he possessed a cutlass, which was left behind by an excise officer, in a tussle with a smuggler on the Chapel Path.

called upon a tradesman in Langholm, who, as ill luck would have it, was just then busy stowing away a considerable consignment of spirits. Thus the visit was decidedly inopportune. The tradesman's mother, however, saved him. Seeing the officer coming, she met him at the door, and dexterously threw in his face the contents of a snuff box. Naturally the officer was seized with a violent attack of sneezing. "Odds the man, what ails him?" the woman kept exclaiming as the sneezing continued, and meanwhile the kegs were safely got out of sight.

#### SMUGGLER JEAN.

Women were sometimes employed to carry on the dangerous traffic. I remember one, named Smuggler Jean, who regularly smuggled whisky across the Border. One of the carriers between Langholm and Carlisle told me that one Saturday morning, soon after midnight, as he was about to begin his journey, Jean appeared, and asked him for "a lift." He was ungallant enough to refuse, as he feared the chance of losing horse, cart, and cargo, should he be met by the unromantic excisemen. However, one of his brother carriers was willing to take the risk and give Jean a ride. She kept in the cart until they reached Stanwix, where she got down at the inn. What with the cold, and the heavy cargo concealed about her fair person, Jean could scarcely "hirple" into the house, but at last she landed the goods safely. Her method was decidedly ingenious. She was completely encircled by tubes which bent and twisted all over her body, and in them she carried a considerable

quantity of spirits. Her daring was remarkable, and brought her large sums in payment. On this occasion she very handsomely rewarded the carrier who had shared her danger ; so all ended happily.

## WATER.

Before the public supply was obtained, Langholm was supplied with water from wells and pumps. On the Bar Brae we had Davie's Well, and behind the Straits there was Betty's Well. At one time another existed at the foot of the Well Close, where in later years a pump was erected. The most famous fountain of all was the Square Pump, and it alone has left behind it something to mark its site. Next in importance may be reckoned that at Moodlawpoint—popularly known as Robbie Hyslop's Pump, from the fact that my father sank the well, put up the pump, and maintained both at his own cost, for the benefit of the public. Very zealously did he look after it—discouraging especially the boys in their eager desire to jangle the handle or pump the water. Indeed, the jangling of that pump handle had much the same effect on my father as the cry of “donkeys” had on Betsy Trotwood in *David Copperfield*. There was also a pump in Elizabeth Street, and another at Meikleholm Mill, but some thirty years ago or more they were all abandoned.

The Pump served much the same purpose to the women as the inn parlours did to the men, that is, they were popular places for gossip, for the exchange of opinions and the dissemination of news. Here began many of those strange rumours which circulated about

the town, but whose origin no one could definitely trace, and it became a common remark concerning some doubtful item of news that it had originated at the Pump. Husbands who lingered long at Masonic meetings, men and women whose attendance at the kirk was irregular, Sunday's sermon, the new elders, the choir, who was born and who dead, and whom a man might, could, would, or should have married, were all discussed here with eagerness and astonishing frankness. It was at the Pump that the scandalous story began anent the prospective marriage of Thomas Black to a lady of only half his summers. Thomas was one of our thinking men, a voracious reader, and much given to arguing abstruse theological questions from the rationalistic standpoint. It was vaguely understood, but the suggestion was never fully authenticated, that he had read and approved of Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*. Whether this was so I do not know, as Thomas was a reserved, shy man, who always kept his own counsel. Then there began to circulate a rumour that he had proposed to a certain young lady well known in the district for her zeal in all branches of religious work—tract distribution, Sunday-school work, and the like. Time passed, but no progress was reported, and the wind of gossip changed: it was rumoured that the engagement was off. No satisfactory reason, however, could be discovered or invented until it came as an inspiration to Jennie Hogg, a skilful and inveterate gossip, that the "engagement" had been broken because Thomas and the young lady could not agree on infant baptism. Jennie adroitly attributed this explanation to Andra

Broughie, one of our satirists, but in my own mind I had no doubt that the whole story had its beginning and ending at the Pump and in Jennie's own fertile fancy.

Every dweller in the New-town of Langholm knows the cool springs of Warbla Well, but better known still is Whita Well, on the brow of our highest hill. Even as the memory on a hot day of "the well of Bethlehem that was at the gate" was to David when he was hiding in the Cave of Adullam, so is Whita Well to the exiled son of Langholm.

#### WHITA WELL DISPUTE.

It belonged to the tenants-in-common of the ancient Ten Merk-Lands of Langholm. The company working the distillery, however, claimed a prescriptive right to a portion of the water, and succeeded in establishing their claim before the Courts.

They objected to the water being brought into Langholm for public use, and as at first they would listen to no compromise, the people took the law into their own hands, and brushed aside all question of legal right. One night a large force of men, under the guidance of a few "characters," out for a little excitement, sought to settle the long dispute by cutting a waterway down the hillside and thus diverting the water from Whita Well into the town. This, they argued would establish the right of the public. The scheme was carried out and the water actually ran waste down the Kirkwynd. For this escapade one prominent participator, at least, served time in Dumfries Jail. Others were fined, but



the fines were promptly met by subscription. Owing to the water running in this way no interdict could be got by the distillery company, unless and until they succeeded in obtaining effective possession of the stream. This the Langholm folks set themselves to prevent. It was rumoured that the company intended to import strangers to accomplish their object, and to meet this invasion a plan of campaign was arranged. A tent was erected near the Well, and from it a strict watch was kept. Should the "enemy" appear the swiftest runner of the guard was to be sent off at once to alarm the town by ringing the kirk bell. I was a young man at the time and had joyfully entered into the business. I remember I had just returned from duty at the Well about ten o'clock one night, when the kirk bell rang out the news. I rushed off carrying my coat and waistcoat and was well up the Kirkwynd before I was fully dressed. But it turned out to be a false alarm.

This struggle proceeded for a long time and was the occasion for a large amount of literature—verses, pamphlets, and letters, not to mention speeches. One of these pieces was in the form of a parable written in the style of Scripture, and popularly believed to have been composed by Mr. Smellie. One popular paragraph in it was as follows :—

"And there was a man in those days named James, whose surname was Eppie, who having received authority from Edgar the Chief, gathered together a great multitude, who being armed with picks and spades, ascended the hill, saying, 'Quit you like men, be strong, and ye shall have water.'"

However, an amicable settlement was effected, and in 1852 a public water supply was obtained.



I recollect very distinctly the opening of the Water-works. Although not a few members of our community were more enthusiastic about the inns than the wells, there was considerable excitement in the town over the event, and a large bazaar was followed by a grand picnic at Whita Well. Some well-known speakers had been obtained, and great hopes were raised concerning one of them, reputed to be a speaker of the front rank. The earlier speeches were very well received, but we all reserved our keenest interest for the principal orator of the day. When at last he arose there was eager whispering and suppressed excitement. All ears were strained to catch the words of wisdom which should fall from his lips. But alas! He began by remarking that it was a beautiful day, and they were assembled in a beautiful place. These remarks were mere common-places to us Langholm people, but no doubt they were the "preliminaries" practised by every orator, and we eagerly awaited the unfolding of the speech. He went on to say that he was delighted to be present, and hoped we would all have the water laid into our houses——and then he sat down. It took Langholm a considerable time to get over its disappointment, but having done so, it took to laughing.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### OUR VILLAGE HAMPDENS.

PERHAPS I might most aptly describe the political feeling in Langholm in the Thirties and Forties, by saying that "Puggy" Wilkinson, who in his leisure from other affairs, made a bare living in a small shop in the Kirkwynd by selling bread and sweets, signed his correspondence "Wilkinson." This was an assertion of his "equality" with the peers of the realm, whom, however, he held in very small esteem. "Puggy" was small of stature and of a decidedly dour disposition, but he had ideas,—a fact of which you felt convinced once you saw the size of his wide-awake hat. His politics were radical and chartist, —indeed, he would have added a lengthy appendix to the People's Charter, —and they were shared by many in the town, notably by the weavers.

But Langholm had distinguished itself in the sphere of politics long before "Puggy" Wilkinson bought his wide-awake, and even before the Reform era, to which I have already alluded. As far back as 1792 some of the idealists of the town went down to the Cross, where they planted the Tree of Liberty and Equality and drank success to the French Revolution. And a mighty disturbance ensued! The Sheriff soon appeared in the town and several of the extremists, among whom was a great-uncle of my own, a Hotson, were sent to cool

their fiery ardour in Dumfries Jail, whilst others more repentant or less prominent were required to give assurances for their future conduct, even as their forefathers frequently had to do in the high old times of Border raiding.

I remember hearing of an amusing illustration of the political enthusiasm prevailing at the time of the Reform agitation. Without any substantial foundation a rumour spread that Lord John Russell was likely to pass through Langholm. Arrangements were hurriedly made to give the popular hero a reception which would be worthy of him and of Langholm. The ruling spirit in the movement was a local worthy who had the gift of tongues, but whose enthusiasm outran his discretion—as even to-day often happens in politics. He organized a considerable company to proceed with him down the Dean Banks to meet the famous statesman, and it was agreed that he himself should deliver an address of welcome what time the less gifted brethren were unharnessing the horses preparatory to dragging the carriage into the town. So far so good, but an unfortunate set-back to the proceedings occurred: Lord John did not come! So after some hours of weary waiting about the foot of Middlehams Brae, the Reformers, crestfallen and chagrined, returned to the town, there to be greeted with the taunts of the political Philistines.

The majority of these enthusiasts were weavers, who almost to a man were extreme Radicals. The weavers formed quite a distinct group in our little community. For the most part they were men well-read, not only in politics and history, but in philosophy and theology as

well, and were gifted by what Mairon Thomson ingeniously termed "cleverality." Of course there were exceptions. I remember there being a lively discussion around the weaving shop stove one winter night, the special topic being "the unspeakable Turk." One of the craft whose indignation had been rising with the tale of wrongs, declared that he would "extirpat" them all. This struck the rest of the weavers as a "by-ordinary" word for Peter, whose vocabulary was not extensive. "What dae ye mean exactly, Peter, by 'extirpat'?" someone slyly asked.

"A' dinna juist ken what it means" Peter admitted, "but A' understan' it hurts them gey sair."

It was Peter, too, who drew down upon himself the wrath of the shop during one of these absorbing discussions, by irrelevantly remarking that he "wadna wonder if the craws had begun to build." But men like Peter were the conspicuous exceptions.

I wonder if it was the idealism of their political creed which made the weavers so ready at all times, and for any cause, to leave their looms. Let the occasion be what it might, one could see them hanging about the town with their aprons twisted round their waists, as if to suggest that they were eager and ready at any time to rush back to their occupation. When the Manse bees "swarmed" on Tommy Elliot's head, they gladly made the event an occasion for a holiday. "Send for my brother Eben," stoically commanded Tommy of the minister who was wringing his hands and predicting "the man will die,—the man will die." "Send for my brother Eben," was all that Tommy said, and to Eben

on the loom was the strange news hurriedly conveyed. Every weaver in the shop at once stopped the shuttle and accompanied Eben as he hurried to the Manse garden. There they found Tommy standing like a statue, his head, neck, and shoulders covered by hundreds of bees. It was an exciting and a dangerous moment, but Eben's skill saved the situation. With great patience and care he "skepped" the whole swarm, and Tommy came out of the ordeal with but one solitary sting!

There was no urgent necessity for the weavers to work at any particular time so long as they got their webs finished by the Friday, when the Carlisle manufacturers collected them. "Web-day" the Friday was called, and about the Wednesday the lazier men had to work overtime to get their webs completed. But once the web was delivered and the money paid for it no more work was done, and the rest of the day was spent in enjoyment, though truth to tell their scanty wages left little margin for excess. In weaving as in other trades wages were then very low. Masons were paid at the rate of fourteen shillings a week. I recollect that when the Established kirk was built on the Eldingholm the masons' wages varied from fourteen to fifteen shillings for a week of sixty hours. A man who got a job, say in the Duke's policies, at an upstanding wage of ten or eleven shillings a week was deemed to have done very well indeed! The average wages in the weaving trade were not quite so good as either of these. One day I heard a curious conversation between the Sheriff and a weaver who had been up before him for poaching.

“What are your wages per week?” the Sheriff enquired, for the weaver had pled poverty as his excuse.

“Oh,” said the weaver, reflecting a minute or two as if afraid to mis-state the figure, “Oh, aboot twae shilling.”

“Two shillings!” exclaimed the Sheriff, “do you mean to suggest to me that you work a whole week and only make two shillings in wages? I cannot believe it.”

“Weel,” admitted the weaver, with manifest caution, “when we’re vera busy A’ hae kent some o’ us rise to about twae and thrippence,” and he said this with the air of a man who had made his last concession.

“Still, I can hardly believe the statement,” pursued the Sheriff. “You work hard for six days a week and you assure me that even in a busy season you cannot earn more than two shillings and threepence a week. Are you sure you have told me the actual facts,—do your wages never, under any circumstances, rise above two shillings or two and threepence a week? Think a moment!”

The weaver did think, and seemed to be mentally reviewing all the facts, and then he made his final assertion, from which he could not be made to budge: “Weel,” he said, “A’ll admit that when we’re juist on the dooble-desperate, A’ve kent us get as much as half-a-croon a week.” And beyond “half-a-croon” he would not go, and with that figure the Sheriff had perforce to be content.

The intelligence of the weavers was fostered by our Library, which supplied them with excellent literature, not novels, but books which both interested and in-

structed. There were then two libraries in Langholm, the other one being for inhabitants who, though socially higher than the weavers, certainly ranked not nearly so high in intelligence and mental acquirement. It was said that very few books were really issued from this institution, as the following incident will show. On one occasion a member sent his boy to ask for a certain book—if it was in. “Oh aye,” said the Librarian, a querulous and sarcastic body who has been mentioned more than once in these Reminiscences, “Oh aye, its in—they’re a’ in !” This singular statement could certainly not have been made of the library from which the intellectual food of the weavers was drawn. Their tastes ranged over history, biography, travels, natural science, and philosophy.

My father often told me the story of a weaver who made a great pretence of knowledge, though his acquaintances doubted its reality. One day the conversation came round to questions of education, and one of the weavers, turning suddenly to this man, asked him if he was acquainted with mathematics. “No,” he answered airily, and quite off his guard, “No, A’ canna say that A’ ken Mattha, but A’ ken his brother Dick vera weel !”

One of the features of the politics of that day which is absent from our own was the practice of burning in effigy. This little compliment was not paid to political opponents alone, but also to any townsman who might have offended against the public taste, say, by ill-treating his wife or neglecting his children. The effigy-burning was made the occasion of a good deal of boisterous humour and it also provided a safety-valve for political passion.

Among others who were thus frequently distinguished I recall Sir Robert Peel, and oftener still, Sir James Graham. The latter was very unpopular, owing to his vacillating policy, and the burning of him in effigy was usually accompanied by the crowd singing a song, only the last line of which I can now remember—"Turn about, wheel about, and jump Jim Crow," whilst most of the processionists suited their actions to the word!

During the Chartist agitation, when fears were entertained of a popular rising, many of the more extreme men armed themselves with pikes, which were really very formidable weapons, and occasionally some "regrettable incidents" occurred. The term "pikes" thus became a word of ominous meaning, and in Langholm its use led to rather an amusing occurrence. An odd couple, mother and son, came to live in the town from a place called "The Pike," over in the Bewcastle district. So, according to our Scots custom of bestowing upon a man, whether laird, farmer, or cottar, the name of his estate or house,\* we always referred to them as "Pike," which, indeed, became recognised as their surname.

One of our local Chartist leaders was Lang Davie, and one day he was heard, or overheard is perhaps the more exact word, to say that he knew of two "pikes" in Langholm. The authorities were alarmed, and made diligent search but failed to discover any of these weapons of insurrection. So they had Lang Davie up before them,

\* It is told of the late Sir Frank Lockwood, the genial and witty barrister, that on going one night to a reception he noticed that the couple entering just before him were announced as "Lochiel and Mrs. Cameron." He liked the idea so much that he had himself and his wife announced as "No. 8, Endsleigh Gardens and Mrs. Lockwood!"



and demanded that he should inform them where the "pikes" of which he had spoken could be found. They were somewhat astonished, if relieved, when Davie drily replied that he was only referring to Jean and Dick Pike!

Dick was a weaver to trade, and his mother kept a cow and sold milk and butter, and both of them were regarded as exceptionally "near." We did not look upon this as a failing exactly, but we all felt that Dick rather overdid the virtues of economy. He fell heir to his brother's fortune, and became the possessor of very considerable means. He went up to London to see about the money, and was met at the coach by two Langholm youths who were to look after him in that gay city. They were partly chagrined and partly amused when Dick directed the driver to take them to the house next door to where the man sold the trunks! When he was about to return home they saw him safely on board the coach at Charing Cross. Dick felt that there was due from him some acknowledgment of the attention they had shown him, but he put his friends to utter confusion by addressing them from the top of the coach to the effect, "that they had been awfu' kind to him, and when they cam' to the Langholm i' the simmer-time for their holidays he wud see that they got a guid drink o' milk -wi' some cream in't."

Though many of our townfolk sympathised openly or secretly with Chartism, none could be found to defend Fenianism. Indeed it became almost an obsession even with the extremer politicians, and we came to fear the Fenians as our fathers feared the French. In this connection an amusing incident occurred. A group of

weavers left their looms one summer day, and eager to discuss politics betook themselves up Wauchope side at the back of Caroline Street, where at that time a foot-path ran. Near to Miller's sawmill there was a field from which the river was barred by a turf and stone dyke. Under the lee of this, and with a bottle of whisky to "slocken"\* the thirst induced by the conversation, the weavers got comfortably settled. The talk naturally turned to the Fenian scare, and loud were the boastings of the part they would play should any of the ilk appear in Langholm—they would soon let them see! Just at this heroic moment a youth, now a prosperous and influential man of business in a large English town, then a boy of irrepressible spirits, crept quietly up by the other side of the turf dyke and fired a fowling piece over the heads of the weavers. Instantly every man of them ran. "They stopped not for brake and they stayed not for stone," or Wauchope Water either, until they had reached a safe position high up on Gaskell's Walk! Then they glanced hastily back to see whether the Fenians were gaining on them, but all they saw was our young friend balancing himself on the top of the dyke and holding his sides in his merriment!

Undoubtedly the most exciting time in our local political history was the Gladstonian period, and particularly during the Midlothian campaigns. Although ere that date hand-loom weaving had almost ceased to exist in Langholm, such weavers as were still "to the fore" determined to mark their faith in the Grand Old Man by meeting him in Carlisle on his way to Mid-

\* To slake.

lothian, and presenting to him a piece of genuine Langholm tweed, woven by their own hands. I believe I am right in saying that they were only able to do this through the kindly consideration of their employers, who did not in any way share their political faith. The tweeds were duly presented, and in his acknowledgment Mr. Gladstone remarked that he supposed the life of the Tory Government of that day would be worn out long before these tweeds would be—a prediction which was of course fulfilled. This gift of the Langholm weavers became historical, and anyone referring to *Punch* of that period may find Mr. Gladstone there portrayed clad in trousers of shepherd's check. One of the deputation to Carlisle on this memorable occasion related his experiences to me. He waxed very eloquent, and was moved almost to tears at the thought that he had been on the platform "wi' the greatest man o' the day," and then he added that to him the most surprising thing was that "he juist lookit like a common man!" About this time Langholm laughed long over an incident which occurred to this same enthusiast. At that date the *Scotsman* was a keen upholder of the Gladstonian cause, whilst its contemporary the *Courant* favoured the other side. Weaving was then extremely slack in Langholm, so that the old weavers had more than ample time to nurse their political enthusiasms. It came to pass, therefore, that a group of them, our friend among them—keenest and bitterest of them all—were to be found each day impatiently awaiting the arrival of the *Scotsman*. On this particular day Davie got his paper and hurried home, eager for the treat that awaited him in speech

and leading article alike. He divested himself of his coat and boots, and had got seated comfortably at the fireside, when on opening out the paper he made the appalling discovery that the newsboy had given him the *Courant*! Accounts differ slightly as to what followed. According to some versions Davie ran to the paper shop without either coat or hat, his hair streaming in the breeze, and his eyes on fire with a righteous wrath and a desire to be revenged. On sifting the evidence I am disposed to regard this part as a later addition, but I think there is no reason to doubt that he did not stay to lace his boots, but ran down Wauchope Raw and across the Boatford Bridge with his "whaings daddin' roon his ankles," as an eye witness described it to me. Davie declined to believe that the substitution of the *Courant* for the *Scotsman* was due to inadvertence, and those who were privileged to be in the shop when he arrived, excited and breathless, told me that it was a scene likely to linger long in their memories. Even when they thought the incident was over, Davie would return and hurl yet another warning against this trick being "tried on again."

Even in our narrower local questions—those which clever and witty people who live in large towns designate "parish-pump politics"—I must admit that our passions often ran to absurd heights. Some excellent stories could be told of School Board elections, of canvassing, and electioneering, but I have space here only for one. One of the Boards, of which I myself was a member, had incurred a good deal of opposition by their action on—I think it was some question of secondary education,

and what I may call the rate-paying feeling ran to considerable excitement. So much so, that it was told of one energetic canvasser, that when bringing an old lady up to the polling booth he shut her into the bus, and then bethinking himself that he had to accompany her, put one leg through the open window, and with much difficulty, drew himself into the vehicle after it ! But my story is not of him but of English Tom, a Cumberland man, whose recreation was dog-fancying. The election happened just when the hounds were being trained for the race on the Common-Riding morning, and though it seems to have little connection with secondary education, it nevertheless became, with Tom at any rate, a question of serious import. One of the candidates was a man called Rogers, a general merchant in the town, and English Tom was duly canvassed on his behalf.

“ What ? ” exclaimed Tom, when the canvasser came to the point, “ Vote for’t Rogers ? Na, A’ wunnut vote for’t Rogers ! Bought turpentine from him and dogs wud’nt follow’t. A’ wunnut vote for’t Rogers ! ”

Our local politics at an earlier date than this were greatly enlivened, and embittered too, by some very clever, though highly personal, lampoons on local people who happened to differ from the author on such questions as the water supply, scavenging, and lighting. They purported to issue from one of our inn parlours where a company of choice spirits assembled nightly to drink whisky toddy and discuss the questions of the hour. Many of the pieces were undoubtedly clever, and being issued anonymously excited much discussion. We all

had a shrewd idea of the identity of the author, but this only added to the piquancy of the satires. Occasionally the quality of the verses fell off, when perhaps the author himself confessed that his muse could not soar that day because the night before her wings had been "steeped in toddy!" One of these satires was directed at certain people who, the author assumed, were anxious to take up the government of the town, and one couplet which was much quoted among us was supposed to have been exclaimed in a moment of rapture by the aspirant to municipal power as he anticipated the blessings which would flow from his control:—

"Oh what a glorious toun and happy  
Frae Willie Dick to Jamie Eppie!"

Willie Dick we have already met, on the Common-Riding morning, and concerning Jamie Eppie I need say but one word. Jamie is for ever associated in the memory of Langholm with apples,—the reddest-cheeked apples ever seen in all the world. Eppie's cart with apples was as well known fifty years ago as was that of Dennis the pedlar. Jamie was our great authority on apples, though he also dealt in gooseberry bushes and kail plants, and no one questioned his supremacy. And I may say here that we knew nothing then of all the fancy names and brands into which apples are now grouped. We named ours as we namæd our lairds,—on territorial lines. So we had "Milnholms," "Nurseries," "Woodhouslees," and so on, according to the orchard which Jamie had favoured that particular Saturday morning. "Willie Dick and Jamie Eppie!"—what memories of olden days and of a distant Langholm the

names recall as I sit here gathering up at the end of my life all these memories of the past!

Only one point more I must mention ere I close this chapter. It was perhaps natural that in a town where wages were so low, questions of poor's rates and relief should bulk largely on the local horizon. As chairman for many years of the old Parochial Board and then of the Parish Council, I have been greatly interested in burrowing into the old records and noting the methods employed to meet the public needs over a hundred years ago. In 1786 I see there were in Langholm 164 rate-payers. Thirty-five paupers received sums varying from 1s. 5½d. to 4d. per week. The total sum required for the relief of the poor was £20. This was apportioned between the heritors according to holding, half of their sum being paid by them and half by their tenants. The Duke of Buccleuch paid £6 14s. 7d.; Mr. Maxwell of Broomholm £0 15s. 9d.; Mrs. Lothian in Dumfries £0 5s. 0½d.; and Mr. Archbald Little, in respect of one half merk-land, £0 0s. 10d. The kirk session found £1 5s. 0d. of the sum required, and the 164 ratepayers were assessed for the balance of £3 2s. 7d. Some five years later, power was given to the local authorities to raise the poor's money by tax, "according to the estimation of their means and substance,"—a phrase which strongly suggests a graduated income-tax. A committee was appointed to assess the householders, and their task must have been a somewhat delicate one, but the members of the committee were put on oath to the faithful discharge of their duties. A sum of £7 10s. 0d. was fixed as the proportion payable by the inhabitants of



Langholm. To secure this the town was divided into ten groups graded by the committee according to ability to pay. I see that the highest contribution was 4s. 2d. per quarter, and this amount was levied only on six persons. Nine paid 2s. 3d., seventeen paid 1s. 9d., and so on down the scale. Twenty-five paid 6d., thirty-five paid 4d., and thirty-four paid 3d. I have had the curiosity to work out the various assessments and find that they total up to £7 14s. 4d., or 4s. 4d. more than the total amount assessed. Possibly this went to form a reserve! The sum thus raised was augmented by fines to the amount of £1 4s. 6d. paid by three persons for using light weights.

Connected with the collection of the poor's rate I recall a trial of which I was an auditor. I may say that in my early years we had a regular rota of Sheriff's Courts in Langholm. Whether this predisposed some of us to litigation I do not know, but my recollection is we seemed to be almost constantly interested in some dispute involving legal action. One family well known to myself was notorious for their love of all legal processes. They were continually seeking interdicts against each other, sending lawyers' letters and the like, on causes which could have been quite easily adjusted in half an hour's crack at the fireside, each with a pipe to soothe his ruffled feelings. I have heard my father tell how one day he was working next to a member of this family, who were intimate relations of his own. Suddenly this man looked up and said with much emphasis: "Robbie, if A' hed a pun note A' wud lay my brother Jock by the heels; A' wud hev the law on him!" Greatly



surprised my father enquired what was the nature of the dispute, and found it was a mere trifle, such as might arise in any family and be settled in a few minutes. The Sheriff once declared of this same relative that he knew more of the *shady* side of the law than any lawyer in the south of Scotland, and the family regarded it as a great compliment, and it is as such that it has been orally handed down to me.

The trial that I wish to describe, however, was that of a weaver who was summoned by the inspector of the poor for the non-payment of poor's rates. The action should never have been brought, but Mr. Todd, the inspector, as I knew to my cost at school, interpreted every law in its strict and literal sense. The weaver, who had received an excellent education, conducted his own defence. Some historians\* have attributed to us Border folk a certain persuasiveness of speech, and the compliment was never more deserved than in his case. He concluded his speech with a peroration charged with native eloquence and pathos. He said he could prove from the books of his employers that he was not earning one penny per day per head for each of his dependents, and "I appeal to your Lordship," he cried in a burst of passion, "and I appeal to this Court, whether I am a proper person to be compelled to subscribe to the support of the poor." The Sheriff was a humane man as well as a clever lawyer, and during the delivery

\* " . . . they have much persuasive eloquence and so many smooth insinuating words at command, that if they do not move their judges, nay even their adversaries (notwithstanding the severity of their natures), to have mercy, yet they incite them to admiration and compassion."—Camden's *Brittania*.

of this speech, strange as it may appear, the tears were running down his face. He dismissed the case of course, saying it ought never to have been brought into Court, to which Mr. Todd drily replied that he had only done his duty.

I hope I shall not spoil the impression which may have been produced by this example of Border persuasiveness, when I add that that same night the weaver and his cronies, who of course were enthusiastic over his victory, made a night of it in the parlour of the Buck Inn. Of course the Sheriff could not foresee this!

Less successful, however, was another Langholm worthy who was required to appear before the Sheriff for some breach of the law. Both himself and his kith and kin had often been there before, and knew the procedure with fair accuracy. So Jamie was "coached" for the trial. All the questions which any one of their connection could remember to have been asked in similar cases were put to Jamie as he was slow of speech, and excellent answers were also suggested to him. Jamie seemed, indeed, to have every chance of getting the verdict, and the group set off to the Court in high spirits. Sure enough the "interrogation" proceeded just as Davie and Sam had foreseen, and at first Jamie gave really model answers. At length, however, there came a question which staggered the man in the dock, and made him look hopelessly over to where his advisers were standing. Davie looked at Sam and all he said was: "Eh Sam, my man, we forgot that yin!" And Jamie was undone.

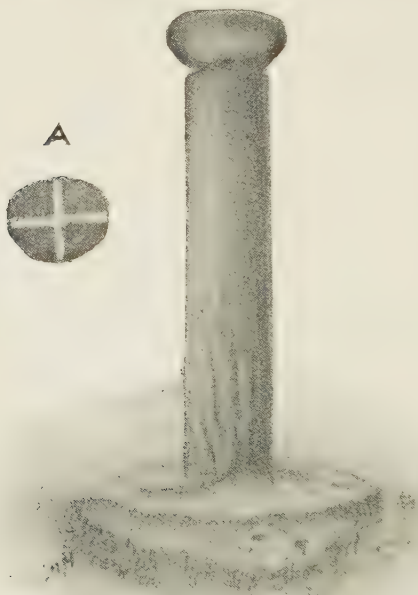
An acquaintance of mine used to boast how he in turn had scored in revenge for a decision given against him by the Sheriff in a civil suit. The chief-constable of the county was a party in the action, and my friend obtained much consolation by addressing all his correspondence on the matter to

JOHN SMITH,  
POLICEMAN,  
DUMFRIES.

I was doubtful whether the chief-constable would ever notice the sting, but it gave his correspondent intense satisfaction !

He could not very conveniently score off the Sheriff, but he obtained some redress by a trick on his officer. One day my friend went into the barber's shop and found that worthy absent, which was nothing unusual. Whilst he waited a man entered whom he at once recognised as the Sheriff's officer. "Shave, sir?" he enquired, and the officer seated himself in the chair. My friend lathered him from ear to ear and then, knowing that the barber would probably be another half hour away, he quietly slipped out of the shop. Of course the officer grew impatient, and when at length the barber arrived he found the man in an appalling rage, indeed, he was doubtful whether the lather was really soap or the evidence of a seizure. After surveying him a moment or two he asked what was the matter, and heard that his "assistant" had disappeared leaving him in this absurd condition. It was only when the barber disclaimed any "assistant" that the truth dawned upon the officer that he had been tricked.

We seem always to have got considerable amusement from our local Courts of Justice, but we never laughed so much at any incident here as we did at the action of a well known bailie of an adjacent town, of whom the



LANGHOLM MERCAT CROSS.

following story was told. A great favourite in Langholm the bailie was, and this did not interfere with our enjoyment of the story. Occupying the bench for the first time he was deeply impressed by the responsibility of his position. A boy was brought before him for

breaking a street lamp, and as the evidence was conclusive the bailie, who knew the boy quite well, "summed up" strongly against the prisoner. Addressing him he said that he conscientiously believed him guilty, and he had therefore no option but to fine him half-a-crown. And then, with a faint remembrance of famous trials he had seen reported in the *Scotsman*, he solemnly added, "And may the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

Before closing this chapter I should refer to the importance in the intellectual, social, and corporate life of the town of the establishment of our local paper, *The Eskdale and Liddesdale Advertiser*. It was founded in May, 1848, by the late Mr. Thomas L. Rome, and by the courtesy of the present proprietor, Mr. Walter Wilson, I am enabled to give an illustration of its first page. It had the distinction of being the first penny newspaper to be issued in Scotland, a fact of which we are all proud. It helped very speedily to stimulate the intellectual life of the district, and was soon taken advantage of by people with poetic and literary ambitions, and for two generations it has served almost as a home letter to Langholm's sons and daughters scattered all over the world. Naturally it was some time before the new paper attained to the editorial "we," for in its earlier years it was mainly an advertising medium, and was at first circulated gratuitously. When at length the leading article did come the paper bore itself with becoming modesty and restraint, and did not make the mistake of a local contemporary of similar size which set the Borders a-laughing by beginning a leading article with the words, "We have no wish to embarrass

# THE ESKDALE AND LIBBESDALE ADVERTISER, AND MONTHLY JOURNAL.

CIRCULATED GREATLY IN THE TOWNS OF LANGHOLM, HAWICK, ANNAN, LOCKERBIE, &  
RECEIVED BY ALMOST EVERY FAMILY IN THE PARISHES OF LANGHOLM, CANONBIE,  
AND WESTERKIRK. 1-SK. ALLEN, HALE-MORTON, AND MIDDLEBIE

NO. 1. PUBLISHED ON THE FIRST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH. (CONTINUED)

## TO LET.

WITH ENTRY IMMEDIATELY.

A DESIRABLE DWELLING HOUSE in Charles Street, LANGHOLM, consisting of Parlour, Sitting Room, Three Bed Rooms, and Kitchen.  
For particulars, Apply to ROBERT FENLIE, Draper, Langholm.

## WILLIAM HARKNESS, PAINTER & C.

RESPECTFULLY intimates to the inhabitants of LANGHOLM, and surrounding district, that he has commenced business as

## PAINTER & PAPER-HANGER,

In a part of that House occupied by Mrs JANE ELLIOT, (next door to Mr. LITTLE, Draper), and trusts, by prompt attention to Business, and Moderate Charges to merit a share of public favour.  
Langholm, 19th April, 1848.

## SUMMER GOODS.

Prices in accordance with the existing Commercial Depression.

## WILLIAM LITTLE,

ANNOUNCES the Arrival of the whole of his recent Purchases in London, May, heston, and Glasgow, comprising an assortment of the following Goods, which for Cheapness and general excellence, are not to be surpassed.—

**SUPERFINE CLOTHS,**  
**DOESKINS, TWEEDS, VESTINGS, CORDS, AND**  
**MOLESKINS,**  
**SILKS AND SATINETTES,**  
**DE LAINES, CASHMERE, PRINTED**  
**MUSLINS,**  
**CELTIC, CHALLI AND NORWICH CHECKS,**  
**COBOURGS, FANCY ORLEANS,**  
**PRINTED CAMBRICS,**  
**GINGHAMS,**  
**FRENCH AND PAISLEY SHAWLS,**  
**COVENTRY AND FRENCH BONNET AND**  
**CAP RIBBONS,**  
**FLOWERS,**  
**HOSIERY, GLOVES,**  
**SEWED MUSLIN AND LACE GOODS,**  
**SILK TIES, PARASOLS,**  
**STRAW BONNETS.**

Brussels, Scotch, and Kidderminster Carpets, Hearth Rugs, Crumb Cloths, Floor Cloths, Mattings, Furnishings, Chintzes, and Damasks, Bed and Table Linen, &c.

## PAPER HANGINGS.

Walls and Fireplaces, (purified by Steam, and warranted fit for immediate use) on a few days notice.  
No ABATEMENT FROM THE PRICE ASKED.  
Langholm, 1st May, 1848.

## WANTED,

AN APPRENTICE to the WOOLLEN and LINEN DRAPEY Business.—Apply to W. WAGG, Draper, Annan.

Annan, 24th April, 1848.

## SALE OF

Farming Implements, Horses, Black Cattle, and Household Furniture.

THERE will be Sold by Public Roop, at CAULFIELD, in the Parish of Langholm, on Thursday the 25th instant, the whole Farming Implements, Horses, Black Cattle, Household Furniture, and Dairy Utensils, which belonged to the late William Nicol, Tenant, there, consisting of:—

## HORSES.

2 Draught Horses; 2 Three-year-old Draught Colt, 15½ hands high; an excellent 4 year-old Pony, 13½ hands high, for saddle or harness.

## BLACK CATTLE.

8 Much Cows of the Galloway Breed, Calves and to calve; 12 three-year-old Galloway Queens; 13 year-old Galloway Queens; 3 two-year-old Galloway Steers; 2 Spot Steers; 4 Calves.

## SWINE SHOTS.

## IMPLEMENTS.

3 Carts and Cart Harness; 2 Iron Ploughs and Plough Chains; 1 Double Moulded Plough; 2 Turnip Ploughs; 1 Turnip Drill; Harrows; Rollers; Cart Wheels and Axle; 1 Winnowing Machine nearly new.

1 Gig and Harness, Riding and Saddles.

## HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE.

1 Mahogany Side Board; 1 Mahogany Dining Table; 1 Wainscot Dining Table; 1 Sofa; an Easy Chair; a handsome Portrait of His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry, and a valuable collection of Books in excellent order; also Bedsteads, Feather Beds, Bolsters, Pillows, Blankets, Sheets, and Coverlets; Mahogany Chest of Drawers; Dressing Tables; Wash-hand-stands, and Services; Looking Glasses, & Carpets. The whole of the Kitchen Utensils, Tables, Chairs, Crystal, Crockery, Grates, Fenders, Fire Irons, &c.

## DAIRY UTEN.

Cheese Press, Whey Kettle, churns, and all the other Dairy Utensils, together with many other articles of Household Furniture.

The Sale will commence at Nine o'clock forenoon, and 6 Months credit will be given on approved Security.

W. KIRKUP, Auctioneer, from Carlisle.

## NOTICE.

All Persons having Claims against the Deceased WILLIAM NICOL, are requested to present the same for payment, and all Persons indebted to the said deceased, are requested to make payment to ALEX. HORSER, George Street, Langholm, on or before the 20th inst., and all accounts not paid before that time will be given to a man of Business for collection.

All persons having Books, the property of the said deceased WILLIAM NICOL, will oblige by sending them to ALEX. HORSER, before the 20th instant.  
Langholm, 1st May, 1848.

the Government ! ” It then went on to declare, in relation to some question of foreign politics, that “ most of the great London dailies have adopted our views ! ”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### OUR WEATHER PROPHETS.

**I** GATHER from references in the magazines that it is now considered bad form to make the weather the theme of conversation. We had no such scruples in my early years. Next to our health, the weather ranked as our most important and engrossing topic. But our interest in it did not lie in the fear that it might spoil our picnics or our tennis. To us, seasonable weather meant all the difference between success and failure ; it meant even the difference between a state of poverty and almost famine and one of comfort and contentment. If the weather was bad and we could not win the hay, or reap the corn, or get good potatoes, then, as I have hinted already, a deep gloom settled upon the community, and working folk laid their account for want and hardship. So we had no hesitation in discussing the weather ! We did not apply either to it or to the climate the terms of abuse which tourists in their impotent rage now employ, but our dependence upon it can be inferred from our description of its different varieties : "grand growing weather," we would say, or "puir hay-weather," or "awfu' weather for the hairst," or "real tattie-raising weather,"—each and all of the descriptions relating to our material as well as physical comfort.

This very dependence upon it for the necessities of our existence, coupled with our daily observations, enabled



us all to become accurate weather prophets. We did not know the word "meteorologist," or Arthur Dickie, our greatest expert, would with rejoicing have appropriated the title to himself.

There were around us many aids to the task of weather prophecy. Cowie's Thorn set in the hollow of the Timpen and Warble top were our natural weather-glasses. Round the Thorn especially the mists gather when rain is near, and old folk held it to be well nigh infallible; and we had many other means of arriving at an opinion. Changes could be predicted by the sound made by traffic on the roads, by the apparent nearness or distance of the hills, by the flight and cries of the wild birds, and by the movements of the cattle and sheep on the hills. These last were especially connected with thunderstorms, and the grouping of the cattle on the highest point of the hill was an unfailing indication of a "dust in the heevens," as Chairlie Hogg always called them. The flying of the swallows, high in the air or just skimming the land, told us whether we might expect rain, and by the circling of the crows we could tell with fair accuracy when a wind storm was approaching.

We had no barometers or weather-glasses to guide us, but when they came some one persuaded the old farmer of the Perterburn that a weather-glass would infallibly tell him what to do in hay time or harvest. So he bought one on the strength of this assurance. But when the glass went steadily up and the rain came steadily down for some three days in succession, he lost all faith in the instrument, and at last he lifted it off the nail and brought it to the door. "Now, then," he says,

“wull you no believe yer ain een?” and he smashed it to pieces against the door-cheek. Like not a few Langholm stories, this one has got into the “funny” columns of the press—it is amazing “how these things get into the papers.”

All this science of weather prediction was an open book to most of the older folk, yet we had among us men gifted more than others in reading the whispered secrets of nature. Such was auld Charlie Hope, whom I have already mentioned. He was recognised as an authority on all natural phenomena. One of our local poets lamented Charlie’s death in these lines :—

“Of a’ the storms that smothered sheep,  
Of a’ the floods, how wide, how deep,  
How oft he’d seen Esk roaring leap  
The Souter’s Stane.  
Wha’ now will A’ thae reckonings keep  
Now Charlie’s gane?”

The Souter’s Stane, a mass of whin rock left isolated in the Esk between the bridges, was our local flood gauge. When the Esk covered it the flood was accounted a memorable one. But on 2nd November, 1898, an exceptionally heavy flood in Esk toppled over this immemorial landmark, to the amazement and regret of the people of Langholm. We were wont to say that anything was “as firm as the Souter Stane,” and had men like Charlie Hope been told that one day a flood would smash it up, they would have ridiculed the notion. But so it happened, and like so much else belonging to that by-gone day, it too has gone. The accompanying picture conveys only a poor idea of its height or its position in the bed of the Esk.

Arthur Dickie, another of our weather prophets, was of a different day from Charlie Hope. In the Census returns Arthur styled himself "a vine-dresser," but, as Lencie Armstrong caustically said when he heard it, if Arthur was in the mood to work he did not object to a job at hedging, indeed, in the late spring and early summer his principal occupation was thinning



THE SOUTER'S STANE.

turnips, and though we all agreed that "vine-dresser" looked much better on an official document, we smiled as we said it. Wearing a stuff "tile" hat, from which the glory had long since departed, and a shepherd's plaid drawn tightly round him, Arthur was one of our most quaint and conspicuous figures. I suppose he

had another, but I can only recall him in one pair of trousers. They were uncertain in shape and dingy in colour, and by his constantly sitting in front of the fire they were well browned—"broo't" we called it—from the knees downwards.

Arthur had some mysterious ailment which prevented him sleeping, and, like the poet, he often

"Wandered forth to view the night  
And snuff the caller air."

In my own mind I associated this affliction of Arthur's with his passion for broth—"broth wi' plenty fruit in them," as he himself expressed it. Lantie Armstrong gave it as his opinion that Arthur Dickie "had suppit mair broth than ony man in Eskdale." And, by the way, we always spoke of broth as we did of porridge, in the plural. Our phrase was "a wheen broth."

One winter morning about six o'clock auld Andra Bell awoke to find Arthur's boy standing in the room. "Can ye len' my faither an auld clay pipe?" asked the boy, somewhat timorously, for Andra had a bitter tongue. "Whae is yer faither?" queried Andra, only as yet half-awake. "Arthur Dickie, and he canna sleep, sae he sent us doon tae ask ye for a pipe."

"H'way hame," answered Andra, in his characteristically querulous tone, "an' tell yer faither he's daft, and if he canna sleep hissel' tell 'im tae let other folk hae a chance."

Old people, when I was a boy, had an idea that stones grew, a trace of the ancient belief that little stones were the offspring of big ones! Arthur held this belief about the Big Dowie Stane—the great granite boulder, carried

by the ice and left lying in the bed of the Wauchope. He used to assert that his father remembered the Big Dowie as a little stone !

It was during one of his lonely walks that Arthur witnessed most of the extraordinary occurrences with whose story he entertained and amazed us. Like Wattie Dingleton's poetry, Arthur's choicest marvels occurred whilst Langholm slumbered and slept. Why the squirrels in the Stubholm wood should exhibit such antics only in the small hours of the morning, and with no other earthly spectator than Arthur Dickie, often puzzled us, but we had no means of disproving the reports. There was one event witnessed by Arthur which I always regret having missed. Often I have watched the swallows making their preparations for leaving Langholm at the end of the summer, and certainly it was an interesting sight ; but only on one occasion did I actually see them take their flight southwards from the rigging of the Established kirk, where, until dispossessed by the sea gulls from the Solway, they congregated for many summers. But somehow Arthur saw this interesting sight with wonderful regularity. He always happened to be about when the moment of departure arrived, and one year his story took on an additional feature. He told us how he watched the swallows and could not understand what delayed the flight, as everything seemed ready. But an unusual chattering and conferring on the kirk rigging led him to the belief that something was amiss, and he wisely determined to see the business through. He told how now and again a swallow would fly a short distance away, and then return to the

main body apparently to report, and then once more a loud "conversation" would ensue. At last two swallows left the rigging and flew quickly up the Ewes valley, the rest of them apparently discussing their mission with great earnestness. After about half an hour, Arthur asserted, the cause of the delay was made clear to him, for the two swallows returned, and close behind them was another flight, and then it dawned upon him that the Ewes swallows were behind time, and had thus delayed the departure of the rest. This opinion was speedily confirmed, for after some adjustment of differences all of them rose as a cloud from the kirk rigging and disappeared over the top of Whita. But Arthur Dickie was the only man in Langholm who witnessed that event.

But all the weather-lore of Langholm was not apportioned between Charlie Hope and Arthur Dickie. Another prophet who could as easily say what to-morrow's weather would be as by casually looking through a field gate he could tell to half-a-stone the weight of any calf, stirk, or cow, was Geordie Morgan. Now, neither in politics nor in meteorology did Geordie "think imperially." His interest in the weather was confined to Langholm and to those small portions of its neighbourhood where his own fields happened to be. "Aye," he would say, surveying the heavens, after he had safely gathered his pickle hay, innocently forgetful of the fact that his neighbours were still "bruffling"\* away at theirs up

\* I am afraid I cannot give the English meaning of this word. It was used to denote a condition of exhaustion caused by working on a hot summer day, but as far as I remember the word was applied only to the hay, the corn, and the peats.

Balgray way : " Aye, if only we could get a day's steady rain it wud be a gran' thing for my "fog."\* In the town Geordie had slowly acquired a reputation for laziness, whilst he yet made a great show of being very busy. Everybody knew all his difficulties, and he managed to get a considerable amount of sympathy on very insufficient grounds. The extent of his operations should not have hindered him getting all his crops in without worry, but he magnified all his troubles, until we who knew him lost all patience. Johnie Weave, feverishly hurrying back to a job he had got, met him one day, and as usual Geordie began the same old story of the lions in his way. This time it was the corn up in the Bleachfield. It was ready for leading, he said, but he could neither get men nor horses for the work. " Horses ? " sneered Johnie, remembering Geordie's notorious laziness and the little patch of corn, " Wey, dear me, if ye gan an wispt<sup>†</sup> yer cl-ogs wi't there canna be vera muckle on't left ! " Geordie was one of those men of no very definite occupation, who in sundry vague ways managed to make a living, none of which required much effort or proved any strain on his nerves. He spoke much of his sheep in a tone that might have served for twenty score, but, as Bet Moray caustically observed, the only sheep she ever saw " were juist a wheen auld paulies up the Chapel Path." Geordie's sheep never

\* " Fog " is the aftergrowth when the first hay crop has been gathered.

† To " wispt " clogs, you took a handful of hay or straw, quickly burned off the loose ends in the fire, and then inserted it, still burning, into the clogs. This was done in winter time for extra warmth.

‡ A " paulie " is a misshapen or unhealthy sheep, generally one regarded as incurable.



strayed into his neighbour's turnip-patch, for the excellent reason that they had not sufficient force of character to scramble through the hedge—miserable, enfeebled-looking objects they were. When Davie Deve saw him bringing them in one day, he looked critically at them a while, and then satirically, enquired of Geordie how he killed them—did he juist tramp on them as folk did on cockroaches !

But lazy though he undoubtedly was, Geordie had skill in many things, and people consulted him on such questions as the dipping of their sheep and the selection of their young pigs at the May Fair, and he understood the Langholm climate as intimately as did Charlie Hope.

I am tempted from my subject to tell here a story of Geordie's wife. She was crossing the Solway one day from Annan Water Foot to Silloth on the English side. The water was a little bit choppy, but Tibbie thought this was a real storm such as she had read about. She became almost hysterical, and succeeded in creating a big commotion on the boat.

"Eh sic a storm!" she cried, "we'll never reach Ian—we'll a' be droon't." And, catching sight of some object in the water, she screamed :

"Man overboard ! Man overboard !"

One of the tugmen tried to reassure her. "It's only a buoy, ma'am," he said, smilingly.

"Eh, a boy, a boy, some puir woman's bairn, and nae effort being made to save 'im. Eh whow, sic a shame!"

The tug did reach the port, but Tibbie made the passage an exciting one.



## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE ARKLETON SPECTRE.

PROBABLY all hilly countries have their spectres, and it is fitting that Eskdale should have hers, though few of her people know of its existence. These optical illusions are due, of course, to certain atmospheric conditions, but to many an ignorant peasant they are messengers of evil. Round the "Spectre of the Brocken," for instance, quite a mass of superstition has gathered, though we know that it is merely the observer's own shadow cast upon the clouds by the sun. On Arkleton Crag in Ewesdale, a similar apparition may be seen when the conditions are favourable, though this occurs only at rare intervals. I heard of the phenomenon from the shepherd on the estate, and his description whetted my eagerness to see it for myself. He described it as a large figure thrown on the mist which sometimes filled the valley on a winter's day. Round the head was a halo of variegated colours inside which was another halo of smaller size but brighter colours. Sometimes there was visible a third halo which, though small, was quite distinct and clear. But, said the shepherd, what surprised and attracted him most was that in the centre of the third circle or halo there was a light as of a candle burning. Being very anxious to see this interesting sight, and the atmospheric conditions seeming to be favourable, I interviewed the shepherd, who

strongly advised me not to go alone, as the combined effect of the sun and the mist was so puzzling that I ran some risk, he said, of stepping sheer over a high rock, in which case I would certainly be killed. He thought also that I was too late in going, as to see it to perfection I should have been on the spot when the sun rose. However, I decided to take the risk and went up the hill. After travelling some distance I heard the sound of footsteps, and presently from somewhere in the mist the shepherd stepped out. He had grown very anxious about my safety and had followed me.

Presently I saw the "spectre," which, of course, was my own figure thrown on the misty screen in the valley. But it was many times enlarged, indeed, as near as I could judge it appeared to be about 25 feet high, though the image was to the knees only, owing to the height of the sun in the heavens. When I lifted my arms or walked the spectre did exactly the same, and it was a weird sight to see it walking as it were upon its stumps. The haloes were not so bright, the shepherd said, as he had seen them, nor did I see the central light of which he had spoken. But the sight was very impressive and fully repaid me for the trouble taken to see it. I rather think that it is not known even to Eskdale people that this "vision" may be seen on Arkleton Crags.

Referring farther to these optical phenomena I remember hearing old Simon Hyslop tell of a mirage which he saw one day whilst taking a walk along Irvine Edge. As he looked to the southward there was suddenly projected on the sky-line, the appearance of a troop of soldiers. He saw distinctly all their movements — the officers

riding, the men wheeling in drill, and so on. Thus the scene lay photographed on the warm air, and then it just as suddenly disappeared, and Irvine Edge reverted to the whaups and the grouse. From enquiries which he instituted he found that precisely at that hour some military manœuvres were in progress in Carlisle.

A similar appearance occurred one hot day in Langholm. The Monument on the summit of Whita Hill was clearly projected on to the face of the Meikleholm Hill on the opposite side of the town.

Probably similar effects are observed in all hilly districts. The effect of light and shade on the Eskdale hills is often noteworthy. Visitors have admired the purple tinge which surrounds our hill tops and which has given rise to the description of "the bonnie blue mountains of Eskdale." All my long life I have been much interested in these effects, and have witnessed some which would demand a more delicate brush than mine to paint.

I fancy that seventy years ago we did not trouble ourselves very much about the beauties of nature. Life was pretty hard for most of us and sunsets and landscapes could hardly repay us for scarcity of meal, as, Kit Ogilvie declared, the view from Arkleton Crags repaid his cow for the exceeding bareness of the pasture ! Though we felt instinctively that God had made our valley beautiful to look upon, it was our visitors, who, comparing it with other places, grew enthusiastic about it. Yet we felt the freedom of it. We might be poor—

" Yet Nature's charms, the hills and woods,  
The sweeping vales, the foaming floods,  
Are free alike to all."

And often I have admired the glories of our sunsets, especially the rich warm glow thrown over the hills about Langholm. When in my younger days I was busy with the peats on Warbla Moss, I was often compelled to admiration at the wonderful colours on the surrounding hills which, I think, can best be seen from that point. Visitors agree with us who have seldom left its hills, that on such evenings Langholm is very beautiful, and on a summer's evening from five to seven o'clock, I think, it is seen at its greatest beauty.

A funny incident once arose through this fiery sunset glow. As many of my readers know, there is on the flank of Whita Hill a cottage,—the Hill-head. When the sun is sinking behind the Becks Hill it often throws quite a red light on Whita. One night this glow was so focussed and reflected by the windows of the Hill-head house, that in Langholm an alarm was raised that the place was on fire. The fire-bell was rung and a large number of people sped with all haste up the Whitshields road, and the foremost of them rushed breathlessly into the kitchen, where auld Robbie was sitting by the fire stirring the porridge for the evening meal.

"Aye, my lads," he remarked, "ye seem in an awfu' hurry the nicht, is there ocht the maitter?"

"The maitter," some one answered, "yer hoose is afire."

"Lowvingenta me!" exclaimed Robbie, dropping the porridge stick, "A' didna ken. We maun see aboot that."

Research, however, failed to locate the conflagration,

and quite as much amazed as Robbie was amused, the crowd found their way back to the town.

Such fruitless chases were not infrequent with us. I remember one clear night in winter some men were standing "cracking" on Langholm Bridge when one of them noticed a peculiar ray of light striking the water of the Dog Pool. It came straight and clear from the very summit of Warbla Knowe. Naturally they began to speculate on the cause, and ere long a crowd collected, for it requires very little cause for a crowd to gather either in London or Langholm. Some one hit upon the brilliant idea that the ray came from a large diamond lying on the hill top. The idea was quickly taken up, and much excitement was aroused. With a simultaneous impulse they all moved off the bridge and very soon the men were hurrying pell mell for Warbla, and on the way up they discussed tentatively the division of the profits. Not a few of them got to the top of the hill, but like so many other diamond hunts this one ended in chagrin and disappointment—and in the laughter of those who had not joined the quest.

During the Franco-German war we were treated in Langholm to the most splendid display of "northern lights" it has ever been my privilege to see. It is quite impossible for me to describe them farther than to say that they covered the sky, were of various colours, and were never for a moment stationary, but kept flashing every minute into new shades and tones. I mention the occurrence because of the fact itself, and also because of the different emotions it excited. The old people regarded the display as a messenger of war, and

of evil omen, even as they regarded comets. Many were the predictions of evil to follow the sight. Another section of the community interpreted it prophetically. It will be remembered that about this date a certain type of religious journal so "boomed" the approaching end of the world that people, it was said, began to take their coals in by the scuttleful. Part of this system of prophecy was based upon Napoleon the Third being the anti-Christ mentioned in the Book of Revelation, and many adherents were won to the belief by one of these journals discovering that, by assigning its numerical value to the Greek equivalent of each letter of Napoleon's name the total came to 666—the number of the beast. So all these folk believed that this *aurora borealis*—"which flits ere you can point a place"—was a supernatural demonstration in support of their theory!

During one of the periods of political excitement this journal made the same discovery about the name of Mr. Gladstone. Some one foolishly showed the paragraph to Johnie Weave, who was one of Mr. Gladstone's most devoted adherents, and there was a tremendous dust. Johnie took it that the man who showed him the cutting himself believed the theory, and he turned upon him with his biting sarcasm and abuse—"haniel"\* and "scoondrel" being among the mildest words he applied to him.

Only one additional natural phenomenon I shall refer

\* This was a favourite word with Johnie, but it is rarely heard now. I believe it was only used on the Borders, and it indicated at first a dog, and then a lazy good-for-nothing fellow.

to here. This was the great meteor-shower of November 14th, 1866. For four nights I did without sleep so that I might not lose the promised star-shower. On the fifth night I essayed again to keep a look out, but when hour after hour had passed, the flesh being weak, I went off to bed and left an acquaintance who was keeping vigil for the first time, with strict injunctions to call me immediately on the appearance of the first meteor. I had scarcely gone when the magnificent display began—but my friend thought it a pity to disturb my rest, and so after all my anxiety I missed the great event. Needless to say this was one of the most grievous disappointments of my life-time. It was a wonderful sight—

“ Lines of fiery glitter tracing  
Parting, meeting, interlacing.  
Paling every constellation  
With their radiant revelation !  
All we heard of meteor-glory  
Is a true and sober story.  
Who will not for life remember  
This night grandeur of November ? ”

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE KIRK.

UP to the Disruption there were three kirks in Langholm—the Established, or the Auld Kirk, as it was always called, at the head of the Kirkwynd, the Secession, or Town-head, and the Relief, or Town-foot. These last two denominations united in 1847 to form the U.P. Church, and in 1843 the Free Kirk came into being amidst great popular excitement. At the head of the movement in Langholm was my friend, Mr. Robert Smellie, who became treasurer of the new body, a position he has held even to the present day. I believe Mr. Smellie has a complete record of the denomination



ROBERT SMELLIE.



of all the coins which have been put into the Free Kirk plate during these last 68 years, and makes very humorous comments as to the buttons and mint-drops which even then found their way into the plate. Mr. Smellie is the personification of the Free Kirk movement, a friend of most of the Disruption leaders, and is one of the last men now left in Scotland who "came out" that famous day in May, 1843. Seceder though I was then and have ever since been, I have greatly admired some of the men that the Disruption produced. I am thinking now of old Robbie Corrie, whose occupation was that of stone-breaker on the Eskdale roads. But this was not his life : his real life was lived in the company of the Disruption leaders, though he never beheld one of them. I question whether either Chalmers or Cunningham knew more intimately the whole of the arguments in the Auchterarder case than did Robbie Corrie. His reading was almost confined to the literature of the Disruption, I mean apart from the Bible and the Confession of Faith. For lighter reading he subscribed to the *Witness*, and day by day, as he broke the hard Eskdale whinstone, his mind moved among those mightier themes. I admit that Robbie was narrow in his views,—as Calvinistic as Calvin himself. Had he lived in 1900, he would have been a Wee Free. He judged us U.P.'s to be too liberal in our theology, and I believe he thought that even parts of the New Testament rather savoured of Arminianism. It was a wonderful experience either to hear Robbie "put-up a prayer" as we termed it, or to read Scripture. His pronounciation would to-day make people smile.

“Canā'-an” he said and “Capernawm’,” and though he was refreshingly ignorant of grammar, yet he brought the inner deeper meaning out of the sacred page, but he preferred Leviticus or Amos to the Gospel according to John.

Night by night he trudged home to a bare little cottage by the wayside, where he acted as his own housekeeper and cook, for he had no relatives at all, “neither sanct nor sinner,” as he quaintly expressed it to me. There of a long winter night he would pore over Covenanting or Disruption literature, and if now and then he felt the loneliness of his position, he had other consolations. Why should he think of his bare cottage when some day he would sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven? So he said one cold day to Lencie Armstrong, who in pity had asked him down for a crack at his own cheerful fireside. “Aye, weel,” answered Lencie, “that’s richt eneuch. Awbraham was a decent, God-fearing man, A’ve nae doot, but A’d never muckle brow\* o’ Jawcob”—a sentiment which caused Robbie genuine distress. A simple, earnest man, far removed from all moral contamination, with his little but-and-ben set at the foot of a green hill, where all the winds were pure, yet he never ceased to lament both his original total depravity and his actual transgression—“the chief of sinners” he called himself, whilst two congregations would gladly have admitted him to the eldership.

About 1862 a new denomination sprang up. We

\* To have “brow” of any one was to have faith in him.

called them the "Morisonians," after the saintly Dr. Morison, the founder, who had been ejected from the U.P. Kirk for teaching doctrine contrary to the subordinate standards of the Church. If I remember aright, this religious movement in Langholm was an effect of the great revival of 1859, and it certainly brought to the front some very excellent types of men and women. The principal promoters of the body in Langholm were Walter Scott, of Holmfoot, a generous helper of every good cause, and his relatives, Robert Paisley and Charles Paisley. It was by the financial and moral support of these three that the new cause was enabled to stand, and ere long it became a considerable force for good in the town.

But it was at first viewed with more than suspicion. Owing to the circumstances of its origin, the U.P.'s looked upon it as heterodox, and I remember the way an aunt of my own deprecated the practice of Town-head folk, myself among others, of going to their annual soiree !

Other "fancy religions," as the drill-sergeant called them, sprang up in Langholm in later years, though I think we always had people who conformed to none of the recognised denominations. Some excitement was created at one time by a sect professing to work miracles. Some members imbibed the most peculiar of all these notions, one of them being that she could walk on the water as Christ had done on the Lake of Galilee. So a trial was made one day down at Cogie in the Esk. The selection for the experiment was an unfortunate one, as it is one of the most treacherous pools in

the river. The crowd managed to get her out alive, but there was not much margin.

It was in keeping with the ideas of the time that each of these denominations should be intolerant of the other. We did not go to other kirks "sermon-tasting," but when their ministers at rare intervals exchanged, we secretly rejoiced when the sermon was below the average that we were accustomed to from our own pulpit.

Andrew Thomson, an enthusiastic "Relief" man, and therefore a regular attender at the Townfoot kirk, in Jean Beattie's presence, spoke of his kirk as "Mount Zion."

"Oh!" said Jean, who was a keen Free Kirk woman, "A' didna' ken the Psalmist had ever attended the kirk on the Brewery Brae!"

All such rivalry, happily, is now past and gone, and we can afford to smile—and wonder—at it. But it was very powerful in those days, nor were any pains taken to hide it. An aged relative of my own struck her son's name out of her will because he left the Secession and joined the Free Kirk at the Disruption. She had seen the birth of the Secession in Langholm, and with her there was no salvation beyond its borders. Families were very frequently divided in this way. Husbands and wives continued after their marriage to attend different kirks, neither being inclined to give in. I think now a lot of this must really have been due to what old folk called "obduredness," and not, as I once believed, to loyalty to conscience. The spirit was carried even farther, and I have known, and have already referred to cases where, say, a woman who sat upstairs in the kirk,

would continue to do so after her marriage, refusing—as a matter of conscience, as I suppose—to change even her pew, lest her principles might be weakened! We seemed to consider that everything connected in any way with the kirk resolved itself into a principle which must be sternly upheld.

This led one day to a somewhat dramatic scene in the Town-head kirk. Betty Wilson sat in the gallery but her family downstairs, and from her pew she could just see theirs. One Sunday her son, sitting at the top of the pew downstairs, fell asleep, and slept long and soundly. Betty observed him, and during the sermon kept glancing anxiously down, and her anxiety grew when Jock did not awake. Then a horrible fear came to her: Jock was dead! This so possessed her that at last she rose from her pew and came out. This in itself aroused some interest in the congregation, because even if you were ill it was not quite the correct thing to leave the kirk. The congregation followed her curiously, and saw her come down the stairs past the window which looked from the staircase into the body of the kirk, then saw her open the door and walk down the aisle with great concern written on all her features. By this time both minister and congregation were also eager and just a little bit irritated. Betty got to the end of the pew where her son was still sitting fast asleep. She pushed her way to the top, and gave Jock a pretty rough shaking, the congregation meanwhile looking on in consternation. Jock looked up very lazily: he had had a hard week on the hill, and might be said to be enjoying the service.

Reassured, Betty walked up the aisle again, up the stairs, and back to her pew in the gallery, as if nothing had happened. Probably she would have compromised her stedfastness had she just taken a seat beside her family !

We young folk, of course, cared little about the finer shades of difference, or even about Moderatism or Erastianism, so sometimes I went to the Established kirk on the hill. What exercised my mind on such visits was not any great question of principle, but rather how it came to pass that the session always appointed Johnie Ca-pa to "lift" the collection. Even on Sundays Johnie wore clogs, which always seemed to have a loose calker, and it jingled at every step as he clattered down the aisle with the long ladle.

Much has been written about the Scots Sabbath, and I notice that when flippant critics, few of whom would appear to have ever set foot on our soil, want to be specially funny about it they call it the "Sawbath !" One does not hear it so pronounced in Scotland, but of course that is a small matter. The gloom and horror of the day has been pictured—the house blinds drawn, people speaking in whispers and reading only the Bible, the Confession of Faith, the Pilgrim's Progress or Marshall on Sanctification, whilst the aged people varied these with Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, and the boys threw themselves heart and soul 'into Pike's *Early Piety* ! But the picture has been overdrawn. It is true we did not play golf or go drives on Sundays, and our young men did not play cards on the hills, but so far from its being a day of terror it was welcomed by us all. There

were exceptions of course. I knew houses where movement on the Sunday was held to be a sin, and where quiet and gloom reigned. And I knew men who were not enamoured of the exercises of the day and held it a weariness. About the Thursday, my uncle, Tom McVittie, sometimes said, with a faint touch of alarm in his tone, that he "could see the Sunday coming up again," as one might fear a recurrence of toothache, but these were not the general feelings.

Our objection to "whustlin' on the Sawbath," as the humorists express it, has often been noted and of course caricatured. It would not be correct to say that the objection did not exist. It did. I cannot explain its origin, but there it was, and to this day I frankly confess to sympathising with the feeling.

On being reproved by his father for the practice, Lencie Armstrong's son defended himself by pointing out that it was a hymn tune he was whistling. "It disna maitter," said Lencie, "whethers it's a hymn or a sang, ye've nae richt to whistle on the Sunday." Perhaps we were too strict, but the generation following us old folk have done their best to make amends for the error.

In days earlier than mine there certainly was a considerable restraint on the Sunday. Elders were deputed to perambulate the town during service, and if any people were found walking they were summoned to appear before the session to answer the charge—and they went, too—probably to undergo the ordeal of a public rebuke. I have read that on one of these visits the elders reported that they found no one out walking but discovered two men sitting at a neighbour's fireside,



and they had warned them against such ungodly conduct. But to most of us the Sunday brought spiritual impulse and refreshment, and a keen intellectual enjoyment in listening to the various sermons, lectures, and expositions given in the kirk. This appearing before the session in any of the denominations was a frequent and humiliating penalty, often for a very small offence. The power of the elders was very great indeed, and extended far beyond the purely religious side of the life of the town. The eldership was a mark of distinction, and I fear it did not always certify that the man came up to the apostolic standard. Ministers themselves were sometimes to blame for this. It was told of the minister of a neighbouring village that when new elders were needed he began at the houses nearest the Manse and stopped canvassing when the number was made up. The first man he interviewed was of a convivial disposition, and often stepped over the line into intoxication, and hitherto his ambitions had not been in the line of the eldership. He rejected the offer in language which Timothy would never have dreamt of, but his wife urged him to accept. She said she once knew a man who was addicted to drink just as her husband was, and after he was made an elder he was not nearly so bad. But the man would not budge and the minister went next door.

Of another minister, a real old Moderate, it was told, with what degree of truth I would not like to say, that when a woman under great convictions of sin went to consult him on spiritual things, he listened attentively to her statement, and then said it was clear to



him that her liver was not acting properly. He spoke sympathetically to her, and recommended a patent medicine then largely advertised for nervous and digestive ailments. But as Bet Moray used to say about any piece of gossip she was retailing with her sweeties, "maybe its not true!"

I remember a painful situation arising at one time over the election of elders in one of the kirks. The meeting of the congregation was duly summoned according to strict Presbyterian usage, and the minister was in the chair to receive nominations to the eldership. One of those embarrassing pauses occurred during which each man looked to his neighbour to commence the proceedings. At last a member got up and deferentially stammered out that he begged to propose Peter Douglas as an elder.

The minister looked at him for a moment or two with a wondering smile, and then broke out into a loud guffaw. "Come, come now," he remonstrated, "no nonsense! we are here for serious business."

Of course Peter could not well speak up to the minister, but for the rest of the evening he wore a wistful look, and his pew in the kirk was empty the next Sunday.

The revival of 1859 was an influential event in the religious history of Scotland, and Langholm came under its influence in a very marked degree. I do not feel that I can write of the inner meaning of it in our lives, and it seems a flippant way of dealing with so solemn a time just to relate an anecdote, but I tell the following story, without any desire to detract from that religious awakening which we all felt :—

Sandie Maxwell, the wright, was so impressed at that time that he deemed it his duty to do some missionary work, and with great courage, if little discretion, he began with Thomas Black, our doubter and philosopher.

“Man, Thomas, A’ wonder ye dinna gan to the kirk,” opened Sandie very deferentially.

“The kirk?” replied Thomas, “why should A’ gan tae the kirk?”

“Weel, ye ken, Thomas, we should gan tae worship a Supreme Being,” said Sandie.

“Yes, so A’ wad if A’ was sure there was ane.”

“Eh man, Thomas,” said Sandie, rather alarmed at this agnostic opinion, “ye surely ken that we couldna make a star.”

“Make a star!” exclaimed Thomas, in derision, “Maun, Sandie, ye canna make a cairt-wheel; in fac’ ye canna repair a peat-barrow!”

Needless to say, this ended Sandie’s evangelistic efforts.

I remember a session case which excited a great amount of interest, if not actual excitement, in Langholm. Thomas Macdonald was summoned to “compear” before the session, at the instance of William Scott and John Smith, their accusation, “libel,” I believe is the word used in such cases, being that he was seen fighting at the Cross on the night of the Summer Fair,—not at all an unlikely event. However, Thomas stoutly denied the charge—he said he was separating two men who were fighting. Now, there had been a wild rumour circulating in the town that John Smith, whilst walking one Sabbath morning along

by Tibbie Lug's Entry had entered a field and pulled a turnip. Whether the dreadful report was or was not true I do not know. And it also happened that William Scott had once made an arrangement with his creditors. Thomas Macdonald was in possession of these facts, and this knowledge gave him command of the position. As leading counsel for the prosecution, John Smith adhered to his statement that Thomas *was* fighting at the Cross, whereupon the accused man made reply that he was not fighting, but, even supposing he had been, "it's no sae bad as yow stealing Andra the butcher's turnips on a Sabbath morning."

"Hoot, toot, Thomas," interposed William Scott, "ye really shouldna say sic things."

"Ye may haud yer tongue," retorted Thomas, now turning upon William, "it's weel kent that ye're a broken-man,\* and took in the hale country side."

The case was stopped; no other accuser came forward, and the verdict in the town was that Thomas had decidedly the best of the encounter.

One of the elders of the district, one Sam'l Nair, was well known to be very fond of his glass, and not a few stories were told to show that he ought really to be reduced from his influential and exalted position. A report was circulated—whether the incident really happened I very greatly doubt—that Jim Donly, a notorious poacher and frequenter of dram shops, had gone to the minister for an interview.

"Well, James," said the minister with some surprise when Jim appeared, "what can I do for you?"

\* A bankrupt.

“ Oh, A’ wud like to be an elder,” said Jim, coming to the point at once with characteristic candour.

“ An elder ? ” exclaimed the minister, in blank amazement.

“ An elder,” firmly repeated Jim.

“ But, James,” remonstrated the minister, “ they tell me you are very fond of the bottle. Is not that so ? ”

“ Weel, A’ is,” candidly answered Jim, “ but A’s no sae bad as Sam’l Nair.”

This was the story repeated to Sam’l himself by a well-meaning man, who wanted to reform him, but it had no such effect. Sam’l thought it was a “ real guid yin ! ”

This was probably a romance, but we knew of men in the town who were sincerely ambitious to join the session, and occasionally set forth their fitness in anonymous letters to the ministers.

The accommodation in all the Langholm kirks was extremely primitive. For the most part the feet of the worshippers rested on the bare soil. People with means had boards laid down, whilst others provided themselves with plaited straw. Weeds of various kinds, and even toad-stools, grew inside the building. In the Established, or Auld Kirk as we called it, the gallery was approached by three stairways all on the outside of the buiding, but only that on the north now remains. That on the east led to the Duke’s loft. There was no vestibule either here or in the Town-head kirk, the door opening right into the building. This made the place draughty and cold. Whilst the congregation were assembling, the doors, even in winter, stood wide open, and at the Town-head I have seen the snow swirling down the aisle almost to

the pulpit stairs. This caused no remark, for it was quite understood that we could not be both comfortable and pious at one and the same time. Cold feet and tight boots were regarded as a Sabbath observance, if not indeed as a means of grace.

I am sure that my friends connected with other kirks will appreciate my attitude when I say that nearly all the religious interest of my life has been concentrated on the Town-head kirk. My father and grandfather were both intimately associated with the congregation, but the intensity of my affection for it I trace to my grandmother, who was present at its inception, being one of those who before a site was obtained stood in the open-air, often in a snow-drift, in a field near to the present Manse. From her own lips I absorbed the narrative of the romantic history of the congregation, and from her eyes, as she told it, I caught that gleam which, to me, has ever shone upon every page of its story. She was but a young girl when the original building was erected, but she remembered all the rejoicings of the old Seceders over the completion of their little temple. Often have I heard her relate, with a wondrous, tender look in her eyes, the story of the Lamps. Some difficulty had been experienced in obtaining a settled minister. Many candidates had been heard, but none of them seemed to have been sent from God, and the members were becoming anxious. One night a friend of my grandmother, a young woman older than herself, who was also deeply interested in the Cause, had a dream. She was in the kirk, where the congregation had already assembled and were waiting for the commencement of the service. The pulpit lamps were

still unlit. One man after another essayed to light them, but though they flickered awhile they afterwards failed, and went out. At length came a young man who endeavoured to light them properly and succeeded. The lamps continued to burn brightly and the service proceeded. The dream was mentioned to several people, but no one took much note of it ; it was a dream and nothing more, and a dream means nothing until it is fulfilled. Sunday came again, and once more the congregation sat awaiting the commencement of the service. Presently a probationer ascended the pulpit stairs. On seeing



TOWN-HEAD KIRK, 1822.

him the young woman who had dreamt was startled, and excitedly whispered to her sister who was near her in the pew, "That is the young man who lit the Lamps." The preacher happened to be the Rev. John Jardine, who received the call and ministered to the congregation, with great acceptance, for many years. Naturally the remarkable fulfilment of the dream made a deep impression on the people, and the incident became part of their wonderful history. When she related this story my grandmother was wont to add, "I saw a Lamp lit that day in that kirk, and it will never go out." When Mr. Ballantyne came to the Town-head in succession to Mr. Dobie, my grandmother, of course, narrated to him this incident, and at the centenary meeting in 1886 he made appropriate allusion to it.

My maternal grandmother also, Tibbie Park, was among its earliest adherents. She was a woman of piety and great charity. People came to her in times when their light had failed, and when their harps were on the willows. When meal was scarce and the pinch of hunger was in the home, or when dire trouble visited them, they betook themselves to Tibbie Park, assured of sympathy, wise counsel, and ready help. She regarded all ministers as indeed the ambassadors of Christ, and would listen to no criticism of them. When Lencie Armstrong—who did not share his relative's opinion that to disagree with a minister was virtually equivalent to denying the inspiration of the Bible—grumbled at the sermon of some visiting minister, she would find an excuse, saying perhaps, that the minister "said some guid things."

“Guid things!” exclaimed Lantie, “of course he said guid things. If he’d got up and blasphemed, some o’ us wad hae ga’en up and quietly linkit him doon the pulpit stairs.”

I remember, at a winter sacrament, one of the assisting ministers giving us a confused and unedifying discourse on that favourite text, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” My grandfather said some rather severe things about it in his blunt, Armstrong way, and even my grandmother failed to discover any good points in it. It was left to Nannie Hudson, who was coming along the Bridge with them, to excuse the discourse.

“It was no sae bad,” she said, “and A’ thoct he was juist awfu’ bonnie on the doors!”

The critics said no more : how could they ?

My grandfather, Jamie Armstrong, was one of the Bloughburnfoot branch, which I doubt not came from Archie o’ the Calfield, and through him was kin to Johnie of Gilnockie. The whole Clan had been portrayed in a light so unattractive that a descendant like myself experiences a relief when he discovers some softer and gentler features. Often when I have thought of the history of the Armstrongs, and the censures passed upon their doings, there has come before my mind an inscription on the fly-leaf of an old Bible, which I greatly prize, and which now lies before me. It is probably one of the oldest Bibles in Langholm, its date being 1669. The inscription, neatly drawn in ink, is as follows :—



JEAN  
ARMSTRONG.

ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG.

His Book, Septem<sup>r</sup>. 16, 1694.

And on the inside of the board is another inscription :—

Isabella Park's  
Bible Book, 1849.

I do not claim that the Armstrongs were ever a romantic people, but one requires little imagination to read into these inscriptions a suggestion of romance, touched by a gentle religious sentiment. Alexander Armstrong of Bloughburnfoot was great-grandfather to my grandfather, and his name appears in the Stapelgortoun Register, under date 9th April, 1669.\* I do not doubt that he presented this Bible to Jean his wife, and the thought of the Bloughburnfoot branch of the Clan possessing a Bible at this early date, so soon after the days of the raiding and rieving, throws a pleasant sidelight upon their nature. It passed ultimately to my grandfather, whom we certainly never suspected of having much sentiment. Apparently he had given it to his wife, perhaps because of the old associations it carried.

I do not know whether it will be considered the correct thing for me to say all this, but I have done so to show how arose some of my devotion to the kirk of my fathers, whose wonderful history I have often been told by my grandmother herself. It will be readily understood, therefore, that when my father and I were en-

\* See *Langholm As It Was*, p. 880.

trusted with the building of the new kirk in 1867, it was not merely a building contract that we set ourselves to carry out, it was also a sacred task,—for both of us took pleasure in her stones, her very dust was dear unto us,—and into our work there entered something of that spirit which inspired the ancient Jews when they set themselves to re-build their splendid Temple.

Even in the religious life of Langholm we developed peculiarities; indeed, it was often just here that the oddities of temperament were best shown. Perhaps there never existed a congregation containing so many “characters,” or one in which their queer little ways were revealed in so picturesque a manner as the Town-head kirk. It mattered not how early you went you were sure to find Dauvid Dalziel (which we pronounced “De-yell”) sitting in his corner seat. My grandfather, Jamie Armstrong, quite resented Dauvid’s record and tried to be at the kirk before him. One Sunday he arrived just as the beadle was opening the doors, and he walked in confident of victory. But Dauvid was already in his pew looking as if he had never come out from last Sunday’s service. Finding the doors closed when he arrived he had just slipped in through the vestry. I myself liked to be there about ten minutes or so before the time, but I never competed with Dauvid, who seemed to allow about half an hour’s margin. One Sunday as I passed the plate I noticed in it one solitary halfpenny, but within the kirk were both Dauvid and auld Wull Jardine. Some curiosity sprang up as to the donor of the halfpenny. Some said it would be Dauvid and some said Wull. The point was settled, however, by Lencie

Armstrong. "Wull Jardine?" he exclaimed, "we're aye glad when we get Wull safely past the plate withoot him taking oucht oot!" This, of course, was only Lencie's way of hinting that Wull lived on the near side of the street. Ah but, though he might put only a halfpenny in the plate, or on occasion pass it altogether, I have known Wull put his hand deep into his pocket to help some widow and her fatherless bairns.

In the Established kirk they "lifted" the collection with the long ladles, but in the others it was taken at the door in the plates covered with white napkins, and the elders or managers stood with reverent demeanour behind them.

One cold winter day in Ewes kirk an unusual incident occurred. Willie Brown was the sole occupant of the gallery, and in the middle of the sermon he got up and astounded the congregation by addressing the minister as follows:—"Its awfu' cauld up here, Mr. Shaw, and A' wad suggest that we sing a Psalm and hev the benediction. It's hardly worth while to bring Wullie up wi' the ladle, sae there's my ha'penny," and he "birled" the coin towards the pulpit.

I can see the old Town-head kirk now—now as I sit at my fireside sometimes writing, but oftener musing,—and what a singular sight it presented, though at the time we knew it not! What with the ample dresses and ancient bonnets of the women, and the shepherd's plaids of the men, it was striking, if only in the way of clothes. During the sermon the men wrapped themselves in their plaids and many of them went comfortably off to sleep, and the rythmic snoring of both men and women mingled

rather inharmoniously with the minister's words. There was an old woman, Auld Nannie we knew her by, who sat just across the aisle from our pew. Often, one of us had to slip over and nudge her, to such an embarrassing pitch did her snoring rise, and extremely disagreeable she sometimes was because of our interruption. She would turn round and glare at our pew for five minutes afterwards. I suspect now we must have been an abnormally sleepy congregation, for I remember Wattie Dunlop\* once stopping abruptly in his sermon and addressing us thus: "Oh, *try* and sit up! Try and sit up and A'll tell ye an awn'-ecdote!"

But even the noise of them that slept was less than that made by the dogs. At the time of which I write, some 80 members of the Town-head kirk were from the country, and of these perhaps about 30 brought their dogs to the kirk, the reason being that the shepherds "lookit the hill" on their way home. But the effect during the service was a little disturbing. The pews were open underneath, and so the collies had the run of the kirk. I never liked dogs, yet if ever a dog-fight occurred—which was not seldom—the chances were strongly in favour of its being just among my feet, and often I had hastily to lift them on to the seat to save them getting mixed up in the fray. By various signs the animals knew when the benediction was due, and showed their appreciation, shall I say?—by barking and then making a bee-line for the door. One Sunday, a herd

\* The Rev. Walter Dunlop was a minister in Dumfries, and concerning him Dean Ramsay relates some excellent stories in his *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*.

from the head of Ewes got up during the sermon and left the kirk—a most unusual occurrence. When he reached the door he remembered the dog, which was then lying stretched out and asleep near the pulpit stairs. He turned round, and, just as if he had been on Arkleton Crag, yelled, “Towler, Towler.” The dog at once responded with an answering bark and made for his master. We all felt that this was going too far, and the incident was severely commented on afterwards. I remember a fight taking place and one of the dogs being ejected. It evidently was not tired of the service, for it at once ran up the outside stair, and we were greatly amused to see it seat itself at the window, where at least it could watch the congregation until they came out. When, in 1867, the proposal came up to build the new kirk, the question of the dogs was raised. Some of the country members deeply resented the suggestion that they should be excluded. Partly as a joke, I got up and said that if the dogs were to attend, I proposed that we should build a large kennel as well as a kirk, and, curiously, this humane proposal seemed to settle the matter.

Probably no place of worship in Eskdale drew so many “characters” into connection with it as did the old Townhead kirk. Chairlie Hogg was one of these, and painfully regular he was in his attendance on ordinances, though, to tell the truth, he behaved very badly indeed, fidgetting all through the service, and apparently wearying for his dinner, which was more to Chairlie than spiritual nourishment. Still, he had a certain understanding of religious truth, and used to rebuke those who laughed at his oddities, drily saying that “them

that laughs at Chairlie laughs at Chairlie's Maker," but his devotion required to be sustained by a copious supply of mint-drops.

Just under the pulpit sat "Picker Jock," the notorious invalid of the congregation. This was not his name, of course, but that was immaterial in a town where, not



"PICKER JOCK."

infrequently a man's baptismal name was forgotten or obscured by more than one nicknante According to his own story, Jock lost his health "in the year 1," that is 1801, but an unbelieving and unsympathetic public attributed his many failings, not as he himself did to "an all-wise Providence," but to laziness, deliberately

contrived and scrupulously respected. Jock was willing to be dependent on the goodness of the congregation and the public, and at their expense he lived an easy life and a long one,—dying at the respectable age of 78. Many harsh things were said of Jock by us younger members of the congregation, but I remember that my grandmother, a woman of gentle charity towards all mankind, ever excused him on the curious plea that “he was an orphan, puir thing.”

“An orphan!” her daughter would exclaim, “Aw wonder what his faither would have been like!”

“Picker Jock” had an artist’s eye for effect, and he generally contrived to enter the kirk just as the minister was ascending the pulpit stairs. Then the congregation would hear the stamp, stamp of his “nibbies” as he hobbled, groaning and “peching” audibly, on his way to his conspicuous seat. It was at this moment, perhaps, that “Picker” was seen to most advantage. His tall hat was of ancient lineage, well in harmony with its owner. It had seen many summers and much service, and he wore it until he was seated. Under it he wore a curious arrangement, as the portrait shows—a blue cotton handkerchief tied round his head by a piece of white tape, looped in front, and often the ends were left dangling over his forehead. Many were the wonderings as to what the man meant by this absurd head-gear which gave rise to the remark that Jock “wrapped his talent in a napkin,” but to us younger folk it was an inheritance, and as such we quietly accepted it, though we sometimes smiled. Strangers laughed outright. His hat being carefully removed and a safe place found for it,—by some-

one else, of course, for Jock lived by proxy,—he would glance around on the assembled worshippers, and if the minister delayed announcing the Psalm, “Picker” would open a conversation with some one in a hoarse whisper distinctly heard throughout the kirk. At times he selected me for these polite attentions, and being but a big boy at the time, I resented them, perhaps, with unnecessary warmth.

“John,” he would gasp in a hoarse undertone, “how’s thy grandmother this morning?”

For a Sunday or two, with shame and confusion of face, I whispered the bulletin, but one morning thinking this had proceeded quite far enough, I lent over the pew, and to the consternation of many and the amusement of a few, I replied, “Sit doon, and try to behave yersel i’ the kirk.” This brought upon me a severe rebuke from my father for wantonly wounding “Picker’s” sensitive feelings, but it stopped the dialogues, which was precisely what I wished.

Jock occasionally acted as bell-man of the town in competition with Pete Wheep, the town drummer. “Notice!” he would say, “A’ cry for thrippence: Pete Wheep chairges sixpence!” But the life-work of “Picker,” his self-imposed task, was to visit the sick and afflicted, a delicate duty for which he considered himself to possess a special gift, but instead of bringing comfort, his ministrations consisted often of a dreary recital of his own bodily ailments. “Aye, Willie Thomson,” he would say, seating himself at the bedside, with much groaning, “ye’re a dying man, ye are so. Ye’ve been a great sinner in your day, Willie Thomson,



and a most notorious liar, humpha, ye hev. Ye've been a Sabbath breaker, Willie Thomson, and a most profane sweerer, humpha." Probably Willie Thomson would manage at this stage to get hold of a "nibbie," when "Picker" would struggle to his feet and make for the door, much discouraged at the effect of his visitation. A favourite chapter to read to the afflicted on these visits was the first of Matthew, but on one occasion after reciting how "Abraham begat Isaac and Isaac begat Jacob," Jock tired, and concluded his reading with the remark: "And they begat ane another doon to the end o' the chapter."

The story of how auld Yiddie Grant's housekeeper prevented "Picker" from praying with her master was often recalled. "Ye're no gaun to pray here," she said, bouncing into the room so quickly, just as he suggested the prayer to Yiddie, that no one could fail to see she had been listening at the door. "But, my good woman, Yiddie desires me to offer a word o' prayer," he remonstrated. "It disna matter what Yiddie desires," said she, "ye're no gaun to pray here." And he didn't.

"Picker's" prayers were curious compositions, abounding in quotations from the Old Testament. Of a surety he would confess that "we have hatched the cockatrice's egg and woven the spider's web," but the spiritual experience either of Isaiah or "Picker" himself, expressed by this phrase, was to most of us a perfect mystery. His allusions to the Prince of Darkness or "the wicked wan," as he called him, were frequent, and here I may say that we often felt a dumb surprise that a regular

attender at the Town-head kirk as "Picker Jock" was, should have such a constant and intimate acquaintance with the devil. He appeared to Jock in all forms now as a mastiff dog barking at him when he was "pittin' up a bit prayer," now as a cow or in other shape. Jock's prayers were also coloured by his extensive reading of Secessionist literature. He was well versed in the writings of the Erskines, and was also a specialist in Boston's - "Bowston" he called it - *Fourfold State*, and he very skilfully wedged into his prayers quotations from these works. The conversion of the Jews was another of his stock petitions, and generally he went through the Twelve Tribes by name, and he wrapped up all his desires in the "vain repetitions" he so denounced in the prayers of others.

We had another man in the kirk who was always ready if not eager to pray in public. His spiritual ministrations were far from agreeable to us, and Jamie Beattie correctly expressed our estimate of him when he said he was "the most impudent Christian in the congregation." His prayers were long and argumentative, with no grace in them, and frequently contained "hits" at the various members of the kirk, and especially at the session, whose lack of spirituality he never ceased to deplore. All that even my grandmother could say in his defence was that "there were guid bits about him," which was not a very extravagant testimonial.

The woman sitting at the opposite side from "Picker" and close to the pulpit stairs, was Nannie Dornie. Her appearance is best described by the old Scots word

“disjaskit,”\* and her manners lacked that delicacy which one naturally expects in the sanctuary. If she fell asleep she snored very persistently, which was bad enough, but when awake she was incessantly searching and scratching about her person, which was far worse, and added greatly to the annoyance of the elder folk, but to the amusement of us young people. Taking these habits into consideration, Willie Dobie, one of the minister’s sons, who had a turn for wit, nicknamed her “Nimrod.” At first the congregation failed to grasp the full significance of the title until it struck some enquiring spirit to look up what the Bible said about Nimrod, and found that he was there described as “a mighty hunter before the Lord.”

Higher up the pulpit stairs sat another old woman, Jennie Riddell, who, in consideration of her deafness, was allowed to occupy this exalted position. When the Psalm was given out, Jennie just stepped up and looked on with the minister. Though it was a daily annoyance to the beadle, this would not in itself have made her notorious, but very often Jennie fell asleep during the singing, and kept rocking her body and bobbing her head to such an extent that the excited congregation expected every moment to see her overbalance and tumble bodily on the bonnet of Nannie Dornie, who sat scratching herself in the seat below.

It will be seen that apart entirely from religious considerations, a service in the kirk, though long and often dry, was not entirely devoid of interest to us who were young, in those long-past days.

\* Decayed : worn out.

Ah, but the congregation were not all "characters" such as I have just described, nor did they all sleep during the sermon. What splendid men many of the elders were! Even yet, after all these years have fled, I can still see auld John Ogilvie, James Johnstone, John Brown, and John Cowan, walking down the aisle, of a Sacrament Sunday, with the Psalm books in their hands, singing the 103rd Psalm to "Coleshill":—

"All thine iniquities who doth  
Most graciously forgive,  
Who thy diseases all and pains  
Doth heal and thee relieve."

And as I took note of these godly men there came to my mind the vision of the old Jewish patriarchs going up to Jerusalem to the Feast, and our bare, old meeting-house became to me even as the Holy of Holies. To hear Robbie Dunn engage in prayer, pouring out his soul in "guid braid Scots," reverently addressing the Deity as "Oor heevenly Faither," and praying that He would "pit Sawtan far frae us a'," to see the transformation of his face, for as he prayed, a wonderful light seemed to fall upon it, and he was no longer a herd on the hills of Eskdale, but a priest within the veil,—such an experience made the Town-head kirk to be to myself and many another "the very House of God and the gate of Heaven."

Though we were much interested in doctrines, and could discuss the Shorter Catechism and even the Confession of Faith with confidence, we rarely spoke, even to intimate friends, of the personal aspect of religion. Perhaps of a Sunday night, after an impressive sermon from Mr. Ballantyne, when there was hush upon all our

feelings, or as we slowly sauntered down from Wauchope kirkyard of a lovely summer night, we might draw near to the deeper things of our own souls, and give hesitating expression to them, but we did not give testimonies. We could not. We could argue on the Decrees or on Election, but whilst doing so we would still guard the avenues to our own inner life. I remember a talkative body from the English side being brought by the colporteur one Sunday morning to Mr. Smellie's meeting. During the prayer, long before Mr. Smellie had finished, he kept interjecting "Amen," and some of us gave him a "glower" to keep quiet, but it had no effect. Mr. Smellie, of course, invited him to "say a word," and that man occupied fifteen minutes by the clock in giving us, not only a detailed history of his Christian experience, but managing as well to insert, at convenient places, a few incidents of his business career. But we Langholm folk could not do this kind of thing.

There was one feature of the ecclesiastic life of those days which the feeling of the members would not now permit,—I mean the public rebukes from the pulpit. I have witnessed not a few such scenes, and very painful they were. Men and even women were summoned to appear before the session for some breach of the moral law, and probably next Sunday they were put under the discipline of a rebuke. I remember one such occasion which distressed all who were in the kirk. A very young woman was called upon by the minister to "stand up," and thus publicly before the congregation he recited her faults, and delivered a very pointed lecture to her. The

poor woman completely collapsed under the shame and humiliation, and considerable feeling was aroused over the incident. Of course some of the men bore themselves defiantly, but the strange thing was that they came at all. The idea of a man dressing himself in his "blacks" to be publicly mauled about in this way, is a matter of amazement to us now.

The services in the Town-head kirk would now be considered long. We went in at a quarter to twelve, but we had no set time for coming out. We were in no hurry, because, for one thing, we enjoyed the service, and for another, there was nothing else we could do. We were not allowed to roam about the country, a practice which I see is now called "admiring the beauties of nature." Instead of doing this, we children sat at home learning the Shorter Catechism (with proofs) and parts of the Psalms. These exercises we very appropriately called "tasks." Besides, many of the congregation had come long distances, and to compensate them, I suppose, they were given two sermons, separated only by a Psalm. When a girl, my wife walked the eight miles from Fiddleton every Sunday, and her people were rarely absent. Others came even longer distances.

The order of service, too, has been greatly altered. We had then very little singing, and what there was, I fear, would not now be considered agreeable. We sang nothing but Psalms until quite a late date. I recall the suspicion, and in some cases the violent opposition, with which the introduction even of paraphrases was met. We sang one at the evening service, and at other meet-

ings than those on Sunday the minister used as a benediction "the last verse of the last paraphrase." This was impressive, but one of our local ministers had a curious way of repeating it, which spoiled all the effect. He began the verse slowly and reverently, but finished it at a kind of gallop :—

"Oh, may we stand before the Lamb,  
When earth and seas are fled,  
And hear the Judge pronounce our name,  
With-blessings-on-our-head-Amen."

The resistance to the use of hymns in public worship was more determined still. The Paraphrases, so many of which, notably the 35th, which is sung now at every Sacrament in a Presbyterian kirk, have become hallowed to us and have entered into our religious experience, were at least drawn direct from Scripture, but the hymns were merely nice bits of poetry. I confess to being among the strongest opponents of the innovation. For many years I declined to touch a hymn book in the kirk. I thought this an evidence of grace on our part, but in these last years I have come to the conclusion that it must only have been an indication of Scottish dourness, for I have come to find in the "human hymns" much comfort and inspiration. The singing was led by the precentor, who got his key from a tuning fork, which was the only instrument allowed inside the kirk. He read the lines singly or in couples, and then the people sang them. Many old folks bitterly opposed the change to four lines being read at a time. As the precentor rarely struck the same note in beginning again, and as most of the congregation dragged some two words behind the leader, the melody, though it might exist in our

hearts, was certainly not evident in the singing. Our list of tunes was small: "Coleshill," "Martyrdom," "French," "Dundee," and "Jackson," were some of the most popular, and about all I can remember.

Of course there was a big commotion over the introduction of a choir. We had heard of a kirk where the choir had sung anthems and once had "a salmon supper" given by one of the members who was a fisher, and we dreaded such innovations at the Town-head. Lencie Armstrong vehemently opposed the idea of a choir, and declared that in a very short time they would be singing a *Te Deum* which Mairon Thomson always pronounced "Teddy-um." But Lencie's scruples were overborne and the choir came, and ere he died Lencie contributed to the expense of their annual gathering. But he had a bad time for many a weary month. The new tunes the choir introduced were a great thorn in his flesh, and he said he liked worst of all those in which "the men gave the women a start and then tried to make up to them again." When they rendered a Cantata in the kirk in place of the weekly prayer meeting, Lencie's comments were worth listening to. One elder whom he had attacked about the Cantata defended the performance, and made the somewhat insipid remark that "he should hae heard the humming." "Aye," said Lencie to myself in one of his outbursts, "they dinna sing! A' understan' that they juist sit and bum' like bees!"

Up to some 40 years ago the congregation sat during the singing and stood during the prayers. This was a trial of endurance, in the long prayer especially, for it lasted from 20 to 25 minutes. The worshippers, though



erect at the beginning, were, ere it concluded, "hinging owre the buik-board," as a relative of mine satirically expressed it. At length the session decided on a change, and an edict to this effect was promulgated from the pulpit one memorable Sunday morning, and it nearly split the congregation. Then the order was made permissive. I remember the tense feeling in the kirk on the Sunday when the change had to take effect. Over forty people adhered to the old, and, as we thought, orthodox way. But year by year the number slowly dwindled. Thirty, twenty, fifteen! It stood for a long time at twelve, then fell to seven, five, three. I was one of the three, but age came to the help of the innovators, and I yielded in this even as I had done in the hymns. Many will smile at this recital. It is true we were only a handful of old folk clinging desperately to a vanishing day—but maybe if our Scottish forefathers had not shown firmness of purpose on matters seemingly immaterial, we would not have maintained our privileges as we have—at least it is nice for us old conservatives to think so.

The minister's part of the service was a very heavy one, and I have often wondered how he did his work. He "prefaced" the Psalm—that is, he gave a fairly elaborate lecture on its authorship, date, and teaching. He also gave a lecture, and this was followed by the sermon, which was longer and more elaborate than the other discourses. All these had to be memorised, for of course we would not allow "reading." To have read a sermon would have brought disaster to the preacher and dismay to the congregation. Cameronian Jennie de-

nounced the Geneva gown as a concession to Popery, and "gloomed" many a Sunday when she saw the minister with it on, but if he had read his sermon she would have hived off and formed a denomination of her own.

The greatest occasions in our kirk life were the half-yearly Sacraments. The services lasted from the Fast Day, a Thursday, to the following Monday. The Fast Day was observed almost as strictly as the Sabbath. The Summer Fast was ushered in by the children making a kind of pilgrimage to the medicinal spring at the Blough Well in the early hours of the morning, a relic, no doubt, of the ancient pagan and early Christian practice of making pilgrimages to sacred wells. There was a service in the morning to which every member tried to go, and a Missionary meeting in the evening. At this meeting the *Missionary Record* was distributed. This magazine was dutifully read by men and women who scorned the lighter forms of literature, but oh dear, what a dry affair it was! One of my brothers, whose humour was touched by a pleasant twinkle of exaggeration, wishful to take a quiet nap of a Sunday afternoon, always took the *Record* to read, for as a rule it sent him off to sleep at once. If it failed to do this, he considered his condition so serious that he consulted the doctor on the Monday.

I was never quite clear in my own mind as to the Scriptural sanction for the Fast Day, and there was never a really authoritative ruling given as to whether it was lawful for us boys to whistle on that day. My own opinion was that we might so indulge when we

changed into our every-day jacket after the morning service !

Services were also held on the Saturday and the Monday, and were well attended. I think it was at the Saturday service that the tokens were issued to those whom the session considered worthy of communicating. Occasionally the congregation was startled by the minister refusing a token to some member. A pathetic sight we witnessed each Sacrament season was the refusal of a token to a man whose mind had become clouded by an accident. An upright and, I believe, a godly man he was, but his poor brain tossed itself into a storm sometimes, and this was deemed a disqualification. I can still see his look of dejection as he walked away without his token. It so affected him that almost of a surety the storm would break out at the afternoon service of a Sacrament Sunday, and we could hear him far up in the "loft" crying out as did one of old upon whom the Saviour had pity. We got used to the scene, and on coming out would only remark, "Jock's been gey lood the day," and then it passed from our memory.

The Sacrament Sunday was a day of several services, each of them of great length. They lasted practically all day, but we wished not to have them curtailed. At the Summer Sacrament we left the crowded kirk, owing to the great number of people who flocked from all parts to the Occasion, and held the service in the meadow at Greenbank. A special pulpit was constructed for use at these open-air Communion, and when they were abandoned I obtained some of the wood and had made from it a garden seat, whereon I have sat through many a sum-

mer day. Many of my sacred memories are associated with these services. Owing to the number of addresses to be given, the minister was generally assisted by three, and I have seen four, neighbouring ministers. He himself preached the "action sermon,"\* a visiting minister would "fence the tables,"—which to me always seemed designed to prevent as many people as possible from sitting down at the Table whilst a third would address the communicants.

The sermons of the visiting ministers were eagerly anticipated, not, I fear, for the spiritual stimulus they provided, but as material for comparison and criticism — our own minister being always taken as the standard. I sometimes fear that our criticisms were not quite just or charitable. "What did ye think o' that man?" old Sandie Gibson would ask as we came over the Bridge. "Oh, he wasna muckle o' a preacher," I might cautiously reply. "Preacher!" he would querulously say, stopping to look at me in a manner as if I was to blame, "A' wasna thinking a'thegither aboot preaching, but the man couldna read—he couldna read the printed Bible. A' didna expect eloquence, but A' thocht that, being a minister, he could maybe read." This, whilst it was probably Sandie's fierce eye upon him that made the man nervous

"No, John," he would say at another time, "A' dinna like the greetin' ministers, but A' prefer them to that man the day, raging on as he did. A' really thocht he wad hev up the turf!"

\* The "action sermon" is that preached before the Sacrament is dispensed.

I recall a sermon of great length by a visiting minister who took for a text, "Are not five sparrows sold for a farthing?" It was a queer sermon, but the only opinion I could draw out of Sandie as we walked home was this: "Yammerin' on aboot a wheen sparrows!" But I knew by the glint in his eye what his thoughts were.

One of the most frequent helpers on these great days was the Rev. "Wattie" Dunlop. I never cared for his style of preaching. On reflection I have come to this conclusion—that there was no real difference between Wattie preaching and Chairlie Hogg swithering! He spoke in broad Scots, which of course was right enough, but he had so peculiar a way of worrying the words that we lost the greater part of his meaning. We disapproved of laughing in the kirk, but we could not refrain from smiling at some of Wattie's quaint remarks. The late Andrew Bowman told me that when Wattie went to "preach in" his brother Robert as minister of Bethel Chapel, Sunderland, he simply dazed the English congregation by his delivery. At the end of the service they had only a vague idea of what it had all been about. In the afternoon they went along the pier and seeing a lady approaching Wattie addressed her thus: "My woman, ye're a douce, canny looking body; are ye Scotch?" "No, God forbid," indignantly answered the lady, to which prayer Wattie, with his ever ready wit, simply answered "Amen," and resumed his walk.

I remember another visiting minister preaching what was perhaps the most extraordinary sermon of them all. I do not now recall the text, but that does not matter, as

almost any text would have served. Beginning with the words "'Twas in Trafalgar's Bay," the preacher roamed over everything in sea, and earth, and sky, for about an hour, when at last he said he would just conclude with that homely lullaby, "Rock-a-by-baby, on the tree top!" Willie Dobie said the discourse was like Dennis the hawker's cart—it had a bit of everything in it, and his sister declared the only consolation she derived from it was that the minister appeared to finish "wi' an awfu' sairheid!" It served us for conversation well into the next week.

But such sermons were the exceptions. Those olden time Sacraments provide me now with many happy recollections. Often in my reading I come to a verse which served as the text for a great sermon on some of those memorable days, and though so many years have come and gone, I can recall the "heads and particulars," I hear once again the preacher's voice, and see the old faces in the kirk—now all away, and only one or two of us left who can talk of the days of old. Everywhere there is change, in the kirk as well as in the market-place, and perhaps most of all in our homes. I suppose there comes to every man of my age a sense of aloneness as he looks back, down the long-past years. As I have been writing these Reminiscences, sitting here these long fore-suppers, I have lived over again the scenes I have tried to depict—seen my old school friends, and the quaint folk who dwelt among us, lived through many a sunny summer or long, cold winter, sat in the plain little meeting-house and seen again the visions which there came to me so long, long ago. Yes, and when someone

has come in and I have laid my pen aside. I have laughed with him over the stories told in these pages, and told him many another which I have not written here. But no one has come who remembered all the men and women, all the events I have described,—and then once again I have felt alone,—an old man trying to interest a new generation.

. . . . .

In glancing over what I have written I am made conscious of having omitted much, and conscious too that much of what I have written, Lencie Armstrong would have rejected as “juist havers,” but I cannot amend it now. Many of the stories I see are “nowther richt spelt nor richt setten doon,” as the mother of the Ettrick Shepherd said to Sir Walter Scott after he had printed her old ballads, but I am an old man and I have done my best, in answer to many urgent demands, to tell the story of the past eighty years, to describe the Langholm that once was but is no more.















